“Partial solutions to the menace”: Philip K. Dick and the Politics of Genre

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In an essay published in 1955, titled 'Pessimism in Science Fiction', Philip K. Dick posits that science fiction (sf) cannot function as social critique without conveying a tentative utopian impulse: a "partial solution to the menace". In the unfolding Cold War climate, it was not enough, Dick argued, for sf to be simply apocalyptic, despite the world's nuclear superpowers threatening the annihilation of human life on earth. This thesis examines Dick's engagement with the structure and function of genre as a political act designed to produce alternative ways of thinking about reality – "partial solutions".

The majority of Dick's work is written in the sf mode, which depicts alien worlds, strange creatures, and various technological gizmos, but it is rooted in the daily struggle of life under capitalism. This thesis builds on the work of the Marxist sf critic Darko Suvin, who argues that sf is a literature of "cognitive estrangement": a type of fiction predicated on the analogical relationship between sf's "estranging" aesthetics and ideas and the lived and imagined conditions of capitalist society. What I argue here is that Dick's sf (and "genre fiction" generally) is imbued with a self-consciousness of its own "para-literary" nature and, therefore, its relation to the means of cultural production and commodification. It is sf's estranging properties and "mass-cultural" status that make incorporation and anachronism fundamental parts of its structure. Dick's sf exploits this distinctive relationality, purposely invoking other generic modes – the Western, detective fiction, the conspiracy thriller, autobiography – to engage in a critique of late capitalism and the hegemony its structures hold over our interpretation of texts, history, and our daily experiences of the world in which we live.

CONTENTS

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Introduction: Philip K. Dick and the Politics of Genre

It has become something of a cliché but when confronting Philip K. Dick in the historical present we get the uncanny, half-paranoid sense that the world resembles one of his stories. Yet cliché or not, getting to grips with this idea helps us to understand something of the politics of his work in relation to the logic of late capitalism. In order to get some sense of how Dick's work is situated culturally and politically in the historical present, this thesis begins by looking at his legacy in film and television, as well as a strange moment in recent cultural history: the controversy surrounding Amazon's advertisement campaign for their TV adaptation of *The Man in the High Castle* (2015 [TV series]; 1962 [novel]; referred to as "*High Castle*" from here on). By analysing some of the key issues surrounding Dick's posthumous influence, I aim to highlight how his work presents us with a fundamental contradiction, which, I believe, can be used to tease out some of the reasons as to why Dick remains important today. On the one hand, we should be in no doubt that "Philip K. Dick" constitutes a metonym for a nexus of cultural production across a range of media – film, television, comic books, and video games, as well, of course, as his voluminous body of written work – and the distributive apparatus that underpins it – production companies, film studios, cinema chains, streaming platforms, publishers, book sellers, and so on. Somewhat ironically, for a writer whose political critique confronts consumerism, alienation, and reification, Dick's legacy has become more embedded within the matrices of capital than could possibly have been imagined during his lifetime. What I set out in the first part of this chapter is the tension between the content of Dick's work and the commodity form that we receive it in, which presents us with a very "Dickian" situation. In other words, the Dick that we confront is, to use one of his own neologisms, a "fake fake" (Dick in Sutin, 1995 [1978]: 264): something that is normalised by being artificial or "unreal".[1] In this case, in the

[1] To provide a clear chronology, dates of composition for Dick's works are given in square brackets. The source of these is Lawrence Sutin's chronological survey in *Divine Invasions* (2005 [1989]: 418-446). Square brackets are used in all other references to indicate original date of publication where chronological clarity is needed.

space where we are told there is a man or "historical figure" there is actually a network of corporate relations imbedding the raw material of his fictions into our experienced reality.

What the initial part of this introduction sets out to do is to approach Dick's writing as a meta-commentary on its own legacy. Thus, by looking at the position of Dick's work within contemporary culture we can begin to understand something of the internal processes of Dick's critical methodology. This, in turn, will help lay the foundations for the chapters that follow, in which I examine the historical, social, and political implication of genre within Dick's writing.

After making a preliminary inspection of Dick's position in mainstream culture, I go on to examine another contradiction in his cultural make-up: his acceptance as a canonical author is always undermined by his history as a "genre writer". Here I explain how this critique of Dick raises wider questions about how writing and genre are conceptualised. In the context of science fiction (referred to as "sf" from here on), this is a debate that surrounds the former's relationship to a more abstract "high-cultural" notion of "literariness," where the latter not only informs a general attitude towards distinctive areas of cultural production, but contributes to the organisation of their individual canons. As a response to this hegemonic structure, I argue that Dick's writing is antagonistic towards perceived notions of the literary, situating it instead as a conscious form of Marxian struggle that engages with both the ideological, formal, and material constraints of genre as the dominant means of cultural production.

In the second half of this chapter I examine sf studies and genre in more depth. Specific attention is given to a cluster of "Suvinian" theorists grouped around the literary critic Darko Suvin and his theory of "cognitive estrangement" – something that has been much disputed in recent debate, but nevertheless remains the field's most identifiable and influential theoretical innovation. The problem I raise in regards to these theorists is not with their political stances, but with the limitations their approaches have in respect to Dick's corpus. It is my belief that a Marxist approach to Dick's substantial body of work does not need to be a restrictive one, but, in fact, demands

opening up to a wider study of the implications of Dick's innovative historicising of genre as a way of engaging with its ideological function.

Adaptation and Reputation

Lawrence Sutin's unrivalled biography of Dick begins: "Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) remains a hidden treasure of American literature because the majority of his works were produced for a genre – science fiction – that almost invariably wards off serious attention" (2005 [1989]: 13). In its most recent edition, however, Sutin redresses this claim, the legitimacy of which has become less tenable as popular and scholarly interest in Dick and sf has continued to gather momentum. The obvious cause of the former's rise to fame, Sutin posits, is "the ongoing adaptation of Dick's works into movies at an astonishing rate" (2005: 8), although, as he is right to attest, the longevity of Dick's work is also a result of its sophisticated social critique. The problem here is that the two cannot be separated from the cultural entity that is Philip K. Dick; for every "dreadful" (2005: 8) film, as Sutin puts it (making an exception for *Blade Runner*), there are social and cultural reasons as to why they are "dreadful," reasons which are themselves important to how we comprehend Dick's writing and understand its ongoing political relevance.

In accordance with the shift in popularity presented by Sutin, there emerges a second question, which inverts the "How is Dick regarded today?" line, asking instead: "How undervalued was Dick in the first place?" Carl Freedman provides useful insight into this matter in his editorial introduction for the second of *Science Fiction Studies*' special editions on Dick:

> When Philip K. Dick died in 1982, his career could not have been reckoned as precisely a failure, but neither was it, by the usual criteria, a roaring success. […] He had produced an immense amount of work – more than 40 novels and some dozens of short stories – but this

> oeuvre had by no means made an impact comparable to its bulk. He had established a respectable reputation among SF readers, earning steady if unspectacular sales and winning two notable awards […] but he was never one of the major stars of the genre; and beyond the specific ranks of the genre was *almost* unknown. His reputation among fellow SF authors was admittedly very high […] and a small handful of others (mainly journalists and academics) were convinced that Dick's was a neglected major talent. (Freedman in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay Jr., 1992 et al [1988]: 145)

From this we get a more balanced analysis of Dick's state of affairs up until his death than the one implied by Sutin's rhetorical remarks. However, while the issue of Dick's cultural status during his lifetime is a fascinating rabbit hole to dive down, particularly for recognising how stigmas attached to science fiction helped to forge links with other subcultures, there is a more pertinent reason for my interest in it here.[2] As Freedman demonstrates, it is impossible to raise issues of Dick's popularity without referring to economics, the latter being a constant source of anxiety for Dick. Dick's financial hardships in the 1950s – his first decade as a professional writer – are well documented by his biographers and bring to light the connection between the formal constraints of the genre and the exploitative conditions of sf magazines, which by the end of the decade had been phased-out by cheap paperbacks.[3] But if Dick was struggling during the 1950s, then the following decade marked something of a turnaround. Sutin notes that writing for the pulp market was only financially feasible "if you had consistently startling ideas and could churn the stuff out at breakneck speed" (2005: 14), which Dick could. The plus side of the shift to book-format sf was that publishers paid substantially more for novels than magazines paid for short-stories. Sutin relates that after his Hugo Award win for

[2] For examples of Dick's subcultural influence, see 'An Obscure Interview With PKD' (2011 [1980] on totaldickhead.blogspot; for Dick's broader subcultural influence, see Simon Reynold's excellent history of post-punk *Rip it Up and Start Again* (2005).

[3] Sutin's *The Divine Invasion* and Emanuel Carrère's *I Am Alive and You are Dead* (2005 [1993]) make sustained connections between Dick's financial circumstances and the shifting nature of the sf publishing industry. For in-depth historical studies of sf publishing in the 1950s see Andrew Milner's *Locating Science Fiction* (2012) and Mike Ashley's *Transformations* (2005).

High Castle in 1963, Dick experienced a mini boom in sales, earning $12,000 in 1964 (the equivalent of approximately $100,000 today), but notes that Dick was still being paid poorly for his work (2005: 174). Furthermore, this did not account for Dick's prolific work rate. To put it into some context, Dick wrote a total of eleven novels between 1963 and 1964 – not hackwork churned out for cash, but some of his best novels. During the same period, four of Dick's novels were published, which Sutin notes brought in $1500 per novel from the publisher Ace (who published three); Ballentine (who published one) "paid slightly better" (2005: 128), but no specific figure is given, and no information is provided for the payment Dick received for *The Penultimate Truth* (1964). Still, these details present us with an important glimpse into the uneven and unstable economic conditions of writing science fiction; Dick could make good money, but only by working himself to the point of burnout in an industry which exploited its workforce and undervalued its raw material.

The sf and fantasy (referred to from here on as "f") writer and publisher Michael Moorcock recalls contacting Dick's agent in 1965 on behalf of a publisher he was assisting, to be informed that "we could have any four Dick titles for £600, and an option to buy the next four at the same price. The publisher, perhaps believing books that cheap couldn't be any good, passed" (Moorcock, 2005). However, as long as Dick could keep churning out the work he could live in relative comfort. Marc Haefele, an assistant publisher for Doubleday who handled Dick's work during the late 1960s and early 1970s, estimates that Dick was earning around $10,000 a year during that time: "'Anywhere but in NYC, that was a tidy income then'" (Haefele in Gill: 2011). But of course Dick could not sustain this pace, which had been kept up with the aid of large quantities of amphetamines. By the early 1970s Dick had crashed; he was in financial dire straits and under investigation by the IRS, which was taking its toll on his already fragile mental health. Meanwhile, his writing had fallen off almost entirely. Lethem and Jackson point to this pivotal moment of burnout as defining Dick's reputation for the rest of his career: "It is difficult to overstate the degree to which Dick's reputation had gone underground in the 1970s and 1980s; it had never been very far overground to begin with, and his stature with publishers was non-existent" (2011: 11). While the *Blade Runner* money would finally give Dick the

kind of financial comfort that he had longed for, it was not until after his death and through the hard work of writer and journalist Paul Williams as executor of his estate that Dick's name began to gain cultural and economic traction.

This sketch of the relationship between Dick's finances and his cultural reputation goes someway to answering the questions posed in Sutin and Freedman's assessments of him. On the one hand, it confirms the former's comprehension that by the late 1980s Dick was ready for a mainstream audience, while on the other, it acknowledges that his life was by no means a straightforward down-and-out tale. It is here that we move beyond a simple forecasting of fame and fortune, and begin instead to historicise their oscillations in accordance with the material conditions of sf publishing. In addition to this, a further observation can be made: that Dick's "particular blend of hysteria and entrapment, fragmentation and high anxiety" (2003: 6), as Christopher Palmer characterises his work, displays Dick's comprehension of the dynamics of labour power attached to "genre writing". Therefore, if we take Dick's writing in the 1950s as an example, it is not simply "political" because it critiques McCarthyism and the military-industrial complex, but because it acknowledges simultaneously the exploitative conditions of the publishing industry, which coincide with the diminishing gap between "high art" and "low culture" in the post-war era. Rather than a bourgeois profession, Dick aligns writing with the jobs his protagonists tend to occupy: artisanal labourers, repairmen, record shop clerks, and used-car salesmen.

The idea of science fiction as meta-commentary on the conditions of its publishing is something I will return to shortly, in order to discuss a well-worn critique of the quality of Dick's writing. The latter will, in turn, help lay the foundations for a more in-depth discussion of genre in the second half of the chapter. However, before doing this I would like to paint a clearer picture of Dick's position in contemporary culture, filling in the gaps between Sutin's initial claim and subsequent revision, and working beyond them. This can only be done with recourse to the film and television adaptations that Sutin is so disparaging of, as they have been the dominant force in introducing Dick to an audience beyond sf fandom and scholarship.

That Dick has been one of the most influential sf writers in the nearly four decades since his premature death is hard to dispute. In 2007, he became the first science fiction writer to be anthologised by the prestigious publisher Library of America, concretising his place within the U.S. literary canon. At the same time, scholarly interest in his work has persisted. The science fiction journal *Science Fiction Studies* published two special editions on Dick, the first in 1975, two years after the journal was established, with the second coming in 1988, six years after Dick's death. In 1992, *Science Fiction Studies* published a collected edition of all Dick articles published by the journal up until that date. Scholarly interest in Dick has continued apace, with Howard Canaan (2013) documenting fifty-seven published essays, essay collections, and monographs on Dick between 1988 and 2010. More recently, essays engaging with Dick's work have featured in *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction* (2009), while a dedicated collection of essays, titled *The World According to Philip K. Dick* (2015), was published by Palgrave Macmillan.

This brings us to the adaptations of Dick's novels and short stories for film and television. *Blade Runner*, Scott's now lauded film (a disappointment in its day, for fans of Dick and sf alike), lays the biggest claim for introducing Dick to a mainstream audience. This is made doubly important by its cinematic omniscience, its "domination over science fiction film in the last twenty-five years" (Fisher: 2018 [2007]: 172). Notably, *Blade Runner* figures as the node by which access to Dick's mainstream legacy and his literary oeuvre are gained respectively, sitting in the centre of the Venn diagram where "highbrow" and "popular" culture overlap. Arguably the second most influential film adaptation is Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall* (1990), an adaptation of Dick's 1960s short story 'We Can Remember It for You Wholesale', which at the time of its release was the most expensive film ever produced. Verhoeven's contribution displays another prevailing feature of film and television adaptations of Dick's work: action. *Total Recall* leans in almost the opposite direction to *Blade Runner*, with its depiction of violence shifts between hardboiled grit and high melodrama. What *Total Recall* counters with is an aesthetic derived from b-movie schlock, which is generally more in keeping with the mess, clutter, overcrowding, and degradation of the worlds Dick conjures in his fiction, but

with tonal shifts towards hyper-masculine comic book action – in one of its most famous scenes, Arnold Schwarzenegger evades capture with the help of an exploding synthetic head.

Notably, the two approaches to nostalgia cinema outlined here have taken distinctive trajectories. The corporatized slickness of *Blade Runner*'s tech-noir has become an industry standard for Dick adaptations and science fiction cinema in general, situating Scott's film as the zero point for cyberpunk, where the pastiche of postmodern design merges with capitalism's traditional screen hero: the lone gunman. *Total Recall*, on the other hand, with its threadbare story of underground resistance against Mars' corporate elite, is something that both aesthetically and ideologically has been transposed into independent film making, albeit with its hyper-masculinised dynamic deconstructed. Mark Bould provides two excellent examples of this in his essay on "slipstream superhero movies": *Special* (2006) and *Dai-Nihonjin/Big Man* (2007). These, he posits, "give us more of a Dickian sensibility than any adaptation of his work (2015: 127). This opens onto a whole other canon (or anti-canon) of work that is Dickian but does not cite Dick's work as a direct influence. Some examples include: David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1983) and *Existenz* (1999), John Carpenter's *They Live* (1988), Lorcan Finnegan's *Vivarium* (2019), and Cary Joji Fukunaga's TV mini-series *Maniac* (2018).

Finally, there have been several television series adaptations of Dick's work, the most notable of which are those developed by the Electric Shepard production company, founded by Dick's daughter Isa Dick-Hackett: *High Castle* (2015-2019) and *Electric Dreams* (2017). It is the former that is of more interest to us here, but for reasons beyond its content and, likely, beyond its intention. The bizarre furore surrounding Amazon's marketing campaign for *High Castle* was well documented at the time, but has since passed into obscurity. Amazon, in its attempt to promote the series as one of its flagship programmes in the battle for dominance over the On Demand market, commissioned an advertising campaign of Dada proportions. This involved adorning New York subway stations and the interiors of some subway cars in the iconography of the ruling powers in Dick's novel and the series. The problem posed by the latter is that the world in which both are set is one in which the Axis

powers have won the Second World War, dividing U.S. territory into the German-occupied Nazi America and the Imperial Japanese Pacific States. This meant that unsuspecting passengers taking their daily commute were barraged by Nazi and Imperial Japanese imagery with very little context as to what it was about. If the desired intention was to provide pure shock value, then it was certainly effective. Mayor Bill de Blasio decried the ads as "'irresponsible and offensive to World War II and Holocaust survivors, their families, and countless other New Yorkers'" (de Blasio in *The Guardian*, 2015); the Anti-Defamation League raised concerns over the lack of context given to the imagery (Baard, 2015); and an article in the *Independent* hailed the eventual removal of the ads as a victory for common sense, while insinuating that Amazon's decision was influenced by the intervention of a "government branch" (Loughrey, 2015). While Amazon's advertising campaign was more PR provocation than elaborate conspiracy, its effect was totally Dickian: it juxtaposed moral outrage concerning the use of fascist imagery against public apathy towards Amazon's own highly exploitative business practices. In doing so, the *High Castle* advertisements highlight the blinkeredness of the popular narrative that separates fascism from the practices of capital and, therefore, the dominance of American capitalism in the post-war era. Thus the adverts managed to reproduce a central political preoccupation in Dick's novel: what can we learn from the affinities between American capitalism and German fascism?

Carl Freedman argues that the *High Castle* novel constitutes a plea, in the mode of the 1960s New Left, for the U.S. to "change course" (2000: 173) and distance itself from its post-war affinity with German fascism. Yet although Dick's work engages with the U.S. rocket state, which saw the literal transposition of Nazi scientists to the U.S. to work on its space program (and for Disney), the straightforward lamination that Freedman proposes is problematic. The clearest indication that Freedman's reading is an oversimplification is the presence of *two* alternate worlds that are posed against the empirical reality of totalitarian dystopia: the first is the world of a the mise-en-abyme text *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, which is a direct inversion of the fascist world – ruled over by a brutal Allied regime – while the second appears as a tear in space-time that allows one of the novel's

characters a glimpse into the world of the writer, our empirical reality. The tantalising prospect of the three together is that their contingency exposes interpretative gaps that lie between fiction and empirical reality.

Dick's formulation is deliberately ambiguous, enabling us to see the potential hope in the relational structure of the three worlds as presenting "another way," but also, more disturbingly, its inversion. This is where Amazon's ads for *High Castle* come in. The controversy surrounding its marketing campaign raised legitimate concerns about how it would handle a very serious subject matter, but it also showed the lack of general concern for the mundane exploitative practices of a company which is now the largest in the world. If we return to de Blasio's reaction, we can see that Amazon's affront to moral decency is purely a symbolic one. This is confirmed by the contradiction between de Blasio's statement and his subsequent attempt to broker a corporate boondoggle with Amazon in 2018 for the building of its proposed HQ2 offices in Long Island City. We can add to this de Blasio's shift from a progressive political line to a law and order stance, which has seen his position on systemic racism within the police force shift significantly to the right during his tenure as mayor.[4] The clear contradictions that arise here play off one another, exposing something other than the trajectory towards fascism that Freedman depicts, but an "other way" as a different form of hostile reality. Curiously, what we encounter in this contemporary Dickian event is an ongoing meta-commentary on Dick's work which enables us to comprehend it as continually engaging with historical material shifts that affect the relationship between art, the commodity, and politics.

Dick, it would seem, is not just alive and well, but is disconcertingly pervasive in the mediatised consumer landscape. And yet there is something odd and quite clearly inhuman about all of this – is Dick a rogue AI running amuck? or is he one of the wackier constructs of the ideological state apparatus? There is a line in The Fall's 1983 song 'Garden' that goes: "That person is films on TV five years back at least" (Smith: 1983). Although I will confess to not knowing what Mark E. Smith's

[4] See Eliza Featherstone, 'Bill de Blasio Should Resign' (2020), Joshua Leifer, 'Bill de Blasio Knows that Cops Protect Capital' (2020), Ari Paul, 'Bill de Blasio is a Progressive Sham' (2018), all in *The Jacobin*.

gnomic lyric "really means," it has always struck me as both inherently Dickian and strikingly adept in expressing Dick as a consumer commodity (meta-Dickian?).[5] Here the transformation of a person into a media component extends beyond the objectifying power of celebrity spectacle, absorbing them instead into the metonymic space of "TV," while the time dislocation – there were no Dick films "five years back" from when 'Garden' was released – disrupts the linear trajectory of the author's life, leaving behind the residual image of what was once a person. Indeed, from my own first-hand experiences, I am keenly aware that Dick is often best introduced as "the guy who wrote the book that *Blade Runner* is based on". Here Bould is able to provide some much needed scholarly credence to my anecdotal claim:

> Adaptations and their sources are commodities bound up in the realms of production and consumption, and thus to understand them one must simultaneously consider the processes by which culture is made out of capital *and* capital is made out of culture. In considering such obviously commercial texts as Dick's novels and stories, and the films derived from them, one cannot deny – however much one might wish to acclaim the genius of Dick or [Ridley] Scott […] they emerge from a mode of production in which Romantic-bourgeois notions of the author and the original are as dead as post-structuralism could wish. (2015: 122)

This deconstructive formulation helps further address the problem expressed in Sutin's dissatisfaction with cinematic adaptations of Dick's work: we can break "Philip K. Dick" down into different types of production, but we cannot jettison any of this material, nor separate it entirely from its amorphous whole. Yet neither should we lose sight of the fact that there is a spectre haunting this "wholeness," the uncanny spectre of Dick. Of course, this does not mean that an abstract essence of the "real Dick" holds out against his legacy of consumerist exploitation, rather that the content of Dick's social critique and his engagement with form present a problem to those

[5] Reynolds documents the influence of Dick on The Fall in *Rip It Up* (p. 175, p. 195).

adapting his work, creating antagonisms and dislocations within the nexus of relations that constitutes the cultural consumer entity that is “Philip K. Dick”.

Having mapped out how Dick is situated in contemporary culture, I would like to pay some closer attention to the concept of literariness and the uneasy relationship it has with Dick’s writing and science fiction more generally. When we consider Dick as a cultural entity, it is a fragmented, contradictory thing that confronts us. One of the foremost contradictions he presents is his canonical status. I have mentioned already the Library of America anthologies, which have rubberstamped Dick as an officially “important” U.S. writer. On top of this there is the fact that he has been instrumental in bringing in readers from outside sf, as Istvan Ciscery-Ronay Jr. observes: “More than anyone else, Dick has beckoned sophisticated readers of literary fiction to SF’s wild zone” (1992: v). It is a bold claim, as Ciscery-Ronay Jr. admits, but his justification is sound: “A more literary writer could not have exerted Dick’s attraction; literary SF can be quickly assimilated to the ‘fantastic’ or ‘utopian’ traditions, literary-history genres of good pedigree” (1992: v). In this respect, Dick represents the ideal blend of pulp sensibilities, political nous, and philosophical profundity, who was able to use the confines of genre to his advantage.

Yet while Ciscery-Ronay Jr.’s argument contributes to the pertinent case that sf breaks out beyond the boundaries of the literary or, at least, radically reconfigures them, it has not dislodged general criticisms of Dick’s style. Such critiques stem from a broader bourgeois understanding of genre, which, regardless of postmodernism’s disruptions of “high” and “low” culture, presents a problematic hierarchy of “quality” and “taste”. Since the 1960s, sf criticism has attempted to stage its own end of history; however, as Roger Luckhurst writes, these “narratives of death conceal the critical desire that SF escape lowly generic status by dying *into* an undifferentiated literary mainstream” (2005: 222; emphasis in original). What is implied here is that sf’s quest for acceptance from and integration into mainstream culture has been subject to its own tendencies towards

selective acts of forgetting. Andrew Milner is instructive in this debate, providing a clear definition of the "literariness" at work in "Literature":

> The 'literariness' of Literature is not, in fact, a property of a certain type of writing but rather a function of how different kinds of writing are socially processed, by writers themselves and by readers, publishers, booksellers, literary critics and so on. What is defined canonically as Literature are, then, isolated examples of the actually or allegedly exceptional extracted from the wider context in which they were produced. (2012: 58)

What Milner presents here in "the actually or allegedly exceptional" is the process by which a dominant culture weighs, selects, and preserves cultural products. The problem for sf, in this case, is that the qualitative measure of cultural production is dictated by bourgeois hegemony, which places genres, their products, and their producers as oppositional to the "artistic," "literary," and "scholarly". Thus, in the structure imposed by the dominant culture, genres are pejoratively associated with cheap mass-produced commodities, low levels of education, and poor taste. In other words, their means of production, which includes their means of communication and distribution, relegates them to the consumer detritus of a received "mass culture".

Historically, the majority of what is considered sf starts out from an essentially "non-literary" position. Its content is considered to be at odds with mainstream literature's traditionally stringent characterisation of realism as something that looks and feels like the world we live in – in the historical novel or the realist novel, for example – while sf's "generic" characteristics are situated as oppositional to the avant-garde practices of the various strains of modernism that burgeoned in literature and the visual arts during the first half of the twentieth century. Yet what is typically framed as sf's "juvenile" or "escapist" content – space travel, aliens, strange, disturbing, and wonderful new worlds – is not the sole factor at play in its denigration and trivialisation. Indeed, content can never be the sole focus of critique – otherwise the works of Edgar Allan Poe, William

Morris, and H.G. Wells would not have such firm footings within the literary canon as they do – but rather, as evinced in the case of sf and other so-called strands of "genre fiction," all criticism must engage, consciously or unconsciously, with the inextricable connections between the content of a work and its production, communication, and distribution. In this respect, pulp magazines, comic books, and paperback novels stand out by the very fact that their mass production and reproducibility situate them, in the eyes of the dominant culture, squarely in the position of commodities as opposed to unique works of art. We must, however, be careful not to make strict analogies between mechanical reproduction and genre, as in recent history the decline of print and other "physical" media formats, in the wake of digital technology and media (most significantly, the central role of the internet in our everyday lives), has problematized the analogue between pulp production and genre products. Indeed, the very notion that there is an oppositional relationship between an industrially-produced, mass-distributed consumer product and what is deemed by the dominant culture as "art" or "literature" is reductive in the sense that it reverts to a static historical model – frozen in the period between the late 1920s and late 1950s, in the golden age of the "culture industry" – and infers that the consumption of industrially-produced, mass-distributable goods is reserved only for the working class rather than being a fundamental condition of society as a whole. Therefore, we cannot simply equate genre and its products to a bygone era of mechanically-reproduced "pulp" products, quite simply because this would make genre itself an anachronism, which, given the necessity of organising cultural information in contemporary society, is certainly not the case.

To put it simply, genre cannot be located simply in the means of production, nor as a kind of field of ideas or attitudes conjured up by the dominant culture. Therefore, any discussion of genre must move beyond traditional Marxist notions of "culture" as either a fixed object located in the productive "base" or "a realm of 'mere' ideas" (Williams, 1977: 19) located in the "superstructure". Building on Raymond Williams' argument in *Marxism and Culture* (1977), my objective here is to approach genre in the way that Williams argues we must approach culture: as distinctive from but

inseparably linked to materialism in our comprehension of history. This methodology is defined by Williams as "cultural materialism": "a theory of the specificities of material cultural and literary production within historical materialism" (1977: 5). In the context of my work, to take a cultural-materialist approach to genre means comprehending the latter as a central organising structure within culture, which is interlinked with the means of production rather than sitting above it or being a "cultural" extension of it. To perceive genre in this way means accepting that genre, as a system that organises cultural material, is interwoven with material and cultural production and is irreducible to either position. Genre, in this respect, is not, in the conventional sense, an "ideology" – it is not a fiction spun by the dominant culture – although it is certainly "ideological" in the Althusserian sense (something that I discuss in more detail below). Instead, it is a system by which cultural meaning is determined; that which enables historical understanding of a cultural product, and, ultimately, what dictates the value of a cultural product within a culture. Genre is, however, susceptible to hegemony and it is in its hegemonic form that we tend to consider "genre" as something pejorative within cultural hierarchies – as the degraded realm of the mass-produced commodity and signifier of a disdainful "mass culture" in general. Yet what we must work towards is an understanding of genre as opposed to these forces of mystification. The basis of my argument in this thesis is that by comprehending the historical development of genre through its cultural-material organisation we are able to perceive its class characteristics and to understand it as a fundamental means of confronting the frameworks and logic (the "reality") of capital's organisation and dissemination of cultural production.

Having gained a sense of how genre is situated in culture and society, we must give some further attention to how incorporation and selectivity within a culture function in relation to genre. By pursuing these functions further, we will be better able to see how some aspects of sf have been absorbed into the dominant culture, while others have been ignored or maligned. This, in turn, will enable us to understand why, in the context of bourgeois definitions of art and literature, Dick's canonical status is based primarily on his recognition as an "ideas man" whose imagination

compensates for inconsistencies in the quality of his prose style. What I am arguing here is that emphasising Dick's ideas at the expense of considering their expression through writing and their relationship to the sf novel and short story is problematic because it contributes to a practice of cultural ghettoization based on the assumption that "good" writing abides by the Romantic notion of a metaphysical inner realm of individual creativity. Such a practice, I argue, is linked directly to what Williams describes as the "selective tradition": "that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as '*the* tradition,' '*the* significant past'. But always the selectivity is the point; the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded" (1997 [1980]: 39; emphasis in original). Thus what needs to be addressed in the context of Dick's writing and its relation to genre and the bourgeois literary canon is the way in which, for it to be incorporated into the latter, it is framed in the context of "creativity" and "imagination".

Williams is instructive in helping us understand the historical conditions of incorporation and selectivity and how they affect Dick's work. At the beginning of *Marxism and Culture*, Williams traces the evolution of the term "culture" and its realignment in the nineteenth century from a term synonymous with "civilization" to something different: "First there was the attack on 'civilization' as superficial: an 'artificial' as distinct from 'natural' state; a cultivation of 'external' properties – politeness and luxury – as against more human needs and impulses" (1977: 14). This pejorative framing of "civilization" signals its first significant break with "culture," which Williams attributes to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his influence on the Romantics. The work of the latter, Williams posits, developed the notion of "culture" as "inner" development, in turn situating it as a descriptive term for the means and works that expressed this development: "that is, 'culture' as a general classification of 'the arts,' religion, and the institutions and practices of meanings and values" (1977: 14-15). However, the close proximity to this development of "culture" brought it into the orbit of "society," as culture became closely tied to "what were evidently 'social' institutions and practices"

(1977: 15). Therefore, "culture" was driven towards "'inner life' in its most accessible, secular forms: 'subjectivity,' 'the imagination,' and in these terms 'the individual'" (1977: 15). In the long historical development of "culture," what is of primary importance to us is how and why selective practices shape it and, ultimately, the resonance of this "inward" turn in contemporary culture and its relation to sf.

The second significant development in the recent history of "culture," Williams relates, is the partial recombining of "civilization" and "culture" as construing progressive development while becoming "increasingly retrospective and often in practice identified with the received glories of the past" (1977: 15). From here, the overlapping received nature of these two concepts gives rise to what Williams calls "a battery of forces" deployed against them: "materialism, commercialism, democracy, socialism" (1977: 15). The historical background Williams establishes is important, as it provides the backdrop to understanding why various forms of hegemony choose to hold on to divisions between "inner" and "outer," "public" and "private" even as the advancements of global capitalism make such divisions inherently problematic. What we must consider is the way in which these divisions are distinctly ideological and proceed from the dominant culture as part of its logic; as a way of putting a friendly face on, what it argues, is the inevitable expansion of commodification into all facets of life. Here genre poses a problem to the dominant culture because, as a structure, it is intrinsically cultural-material. A sf writer, for example, can have the most vivid imagination (or the most juvenile), but it can only be exercised in relation to the means of production through which sf is produced. In this respect, sf and other "genre fiction" does not simply engage in a critique or allegorising of "society" as an objective thing from which it stands removed, but formulates a critical discourse in relation to itself and the apparatuses of production and distribution that are always already conditions of its existence.

It will be useful here to think about the ideas outlined in the above in specific relation to Dick and, particularly, to the way in which conversations surrounding his writing are framed in the context of "ideas," "imagination," and "content," while underplaying the integral role of writing, materialism,

and form in his work. For example, when Stephanie Burt, a scholar with a nuanced understanding of Dick and sf, points out that Dick's prose "oscillates between workmanlike or incompetent" (2008), it is hard not to feel that she steers debate surrounding Dick's work down a narrow corridor by couching his work in terms suited to both the academy and bourgeois taste. Clearly the "workmanlike" is placed at the opposite end of the literary spectrum to the poetic. Thus by approaching Dick using the measure of the dominant culture to assess the "quality" of his prose, Burt infers that it is imagination that must take the place of writing in Dick's work. Yet this is at odds with the close proximity between writing and work in "genre fiction," particularly within its period of pulp production when the limitations and conventions of the magazine form and the short story bore great influence on their written content. Dick's oeuvre, which is certainly uneven in terms of its prose style and quality, is, however, less interested in appealing to bourgeois notions of style and far more invested in experimenting with the architecture of genre: using its tropes and limitations creatively as a way of engaging with the conditions of cultural production and simultaneously applying this as a means of historically-engaged social critique. In this respect, to try and separate Dick's ideas from his "workmanlike" or "generic" prose is a misstep; it reproduces the terms of the dominant culture, whose narrow perspective on literature and reality itself Dick found oppressive.

A similarly problematic framing of Dick is displayed in the comments section of an article by Simon Sellars in the *Ballardian*. In the article, Sellars pays tribute to Dick, drawing parallels between him and his transatlantic contemporary J.G. Ballard. Yet Sellars' praise for Dick's work is undercut in the comments, in which he writes: "even hardcore Dick obsessives would agree that much of his writing is sloppy (with a handful of exceptions)" (Simon Sellars. *Comments* in Sellers, 2008). Mark Burgess affirms this line of argument, adding: "To me, PKD was first and foremost an ideas man" (Mark Burgess. *Comments* in Sellars, 2008). Fortunately, the Italian literary critic Umberto Rossi provides an insightful response to these assessments, positing that they place too high a value on the poetic (represented in this instance by Ballard) while ignoring "the architecture of his [Dick's] novels [which] is sometime [sic] terribly complex and incredibly sophisticated" (Umberto Rossi. *Comments*

in Sellers, 2008). Rossi's use of the term "architecture" is essential in comprehending how Dick's work is so much more than "good ideas". Indeed, what Dick's stories are so adept at doing is engaging with the spatiality of writing in relation to history. What I mean by this is that Dick reproduces the experience of living in late-capitalist America, not by telling us a story that is allegorical in the old sense – in the religious allegory of Bunyan or the political allegory of Orwell, for example – but by reproducing the sublime jumble of the cultural and material landscape that spills across post-World War Two America.

In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Fredric Jameson argues that since roughly the mid-twentieth century onwards (after modernism ceases to be a dominant artistic form in the West), the ebbing of the fixed, individual subject and with it the idiosyncratic styles of modernist writers give way to what he defines as "pastiche": "the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture" (1991: 17-18). It is this spatialization of history that is so apparent in Dick's writing. The 1950s (and in later works the 1960s) is his historical "referent": a composite zone of stereotypes for him to endlessly draw on and rework: Eisenhower, rock 'n' roll, Disneyland, Ronald Reagan, suburbia, Marilyn Monroe, Joseph McCarthy, the Civil Rights Movement, Sputnik, Wernher von Braun. When Rossi posits that with Dick, "we're not dealing with a crap artist, and if he is […] he's one of those writers who can turn crap into gold" (*Comments* in Sellers, 2008), what he means is that Dick recognises an inherent contingency of culture's "crap" and "gold," which can be combined selectively, but cannot be separated. Thus what is "generic" in Dick's writing is very similar to what Jameson perceives as "nostalgic" in postmodern culture. Dick's texts are architectural designs built from empty stereotypes, which, like Jameson's description of the "nostalgia film," reproduce "pseudohistorical depth" (Jameson, 1991: 20). Take, for example, the early novel *The Man Who Japed* (1956). In a particularly striking scene, the story's protagonist visits a museum exhibition called "Life in the Age of Waste": "An entire white-stucco house had been painstakingly reconstructed, with sidewalk and lawn, robot mannikins, hot food on

the table, scented water in the tile bathtub. It walked, talked, sang and glowed" (2000 [1956]: 61). By the push of a button, the idyllic domestic scene is transformed into a post-apocalyptic waste, in which a few survivors huddle amongst the wreckage. Here Cold War paranoia is transformed into a museum piece of the future – a sf method that Jameson calls "nostalgia for the present" (ref.). The nostalgia effect produced here is fundamental to Dick's writing, as it does not so much seek to tap into a "factual" history nor, in the Wellsian sense, a "progressive" one, but rather to reproduce the depthlessness of late-capitalist experience, in which a world of pseudo things and values have become so overdetermined in the forefront of daily life that it is by spectacle and simulacra that the subject must now orient themselves.

Dick reuses the concept of the model home – no doubt enjoying the neat double meaning of "model" in relation to the artificiality of the suburbs – several more times in his oeuvre, but the most striking example is that which comes not long after the example in *The Man Who Japed*, in *Time Out of Joint* (1959 [1958]; referred to as "*Time Out*" from here on). In the latter, we are faced with a whole fake town rather than just a model house, which acts as a sort of containment facility for an important scientist, Ragle Gumm, who is experiencing burn-out. The town acts as a nostalgic site in which to facilitate Gumm's talents while he recovers from his illness. The problem, of course, is that the carefully curated suburban idyll contains inconsistencies that alert Gumm to the fact that something is not quite right with his experienced reality. Towards the beginning of the novel, Gumm discovers a magazine which contains an article on Marilyn Monroe. What worries him, however, is that he has never heard of Monroe, despite the magazine indicating that she is quite famous. There is a rift, Gumm begins to recognise, between perceived or "experienced" reality and the objects that populate it: "'I'm having trouble with words,'" says Gumm shortly after, "'things aren't what they seem'" (2003 [1959]: 55). Indeed, things are very seldom; we rely on appearances and approximations for navigating reality. As Marx famously express in the first volume of *Capital*, the commodity itself "reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things" (1990: 164-5).

We are, then, constantly in the habit of having to navigate a world of things which contain within them numerous complex internal relations that have their own social and cultural characteristics. This relationality is something that writing itself and with it novels and magazines as forms are entwined. Genre is particularly engaged with problems of appearance and approximation because it deals in generic units, reified objects, and stereotypes. Thus it is not that genre is some unsung force for "good" in the struggle against capital – it is very often complacent, chauvinistic, and reactionary – but, because it is engaged historically with the emergence of a society "where exchange value has been generalized to the point at which the very memory of use value is effaced" (Jameson, 1991: 18). Dick's sf is not designed to be a thinly-veiled allegory of his own plight as a writer, nor should it be oversimplified as a broadside of sf and the culture industry itself. Rather, Dick taps into the generic potential of sf, in order to show that there is a symbolic nature to the way that production is represented an understood, which must be uncovered if we are to get to grips with history and reality. In Brian Aldiss' seminal history of sf, *Billion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (1973), Aldiss states that "[Dick] is so much an anti-materialist, because he so mistrusts appearances" (1973: 310). In fact, it is quite the opposite: Dick is never able to remove himself from the material because he understands its inherent link to appearances.

From a bourgeois perspective, genre is an uncomfortable reminder that writers are not simply "creative" individuals, nor plucky entrepreneurs or genius figures, but workers enmeshed in the productive forces of capital. For those who control the cultural apparatuses, it is desirable for cultural products to be thought of as metaphysical, predicated on abstract notions of aesthetics and technique; they should not, intentionally or unintentionally, remind us of the exploitative relations by which they come into being. Genre, as I have said, is not a subversive element in its own right: it undergirds as well as contests the dominant culture's formulation of "art" and "literature" as internal, private spheres of creativity and expression. The dominant culture places "genre" in an oppositional relation with Literature, in order to uphold the mystification of cultural production, which is to obscure the fact that genre approaches us as always already demystified in its

embodiment of cultural production as overtly commercial as opposed to abstractly artistic. It is at this point, having exposed genre's dual relation with the dominant mode of production, that we must begin to consider it as an inherently "ideological" structure. Just as an ideology provides a framework for comprehending the world, so genre acts as a structure which is necessary for organising cultural material. Indeed, for as long as there is cultural production, we will always need genre to manage it – like Louis Althusser says of ideology, genre, too, is "eternal" (2001: 109). In this respect, genre is neither "good" nor "bad" – just as ideology is not a mask or veil obscuring the true reality – rather it is a structure used to process and sort cultural materials, and, as a result, is itself a way of constructing meaning and, ultimately, reality. Nevertheless, those who control the productive and distributive cultural apparatuses are those in positions of political and economic power. This means that a hegemonic formulation of genre tends to dominate the way in which it is commonly thought. We must understand Dick's work as using sf as means of opposing cultural hegemony and its control over meaning and reality.

To think of genre as ideological means negotiating the difficult theoretical territory of ideology itself. Terry Eagleton's work on the subject is useful here as it dispenses with the unhelpful perception of ideology as a tool deployed purely by the rich and powerful to consolidate their power and influence (Eagleton, 2007 [1991]: 5). Ideologies do not just exist for the ruling classes, but are found amongst the oppressed; they are not only hegemonic, but fundamental to marginalised cultures. Thus ideology, as Eagleton defines it, is not the peddling of a spurious reality, but one interpretation of the world among many: "successful ideologies must be more than imposed illusions, and for all their inconsistencies must communicate to their subjects a version of social reality which is real and recognizable enough not to be simply rejected out of hand" (2007: 14-15). Here Eagleton's argument draws on Althusser's critique of the conceptualisation of ideology laid down by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* (1845-46). Althusser's issue with the latter is that it portrays ideology as "an imaginary assemblage (*bricolage*), a pure dream, empty and vain" (2001 [1970], 108). Such a theorisation of ideology, Althusser argues, is a "negative," pre-Freudian one,

which must be reformulated into a "positive" concept akin to the Freudian dream or unconscious (1970: 109). The Freudian emphasis here is important because, for Freud, the reality principle is itself an ideological construction. The similarity between the unconscious and ideology is highlighted by Slavoj Žižek in his writing on one of Freud's most renowned disciples, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan: "[For Lacan, psychoanalysis] does not show an individual the way to accommodate him- or herself to the demands of social reality; instead it explains how something like reality constitutes itself in the first place" (2006: 3). In short, what both Eagleton and Althusser propose – via Freud and Lacan – is that ideology is not pure fantasy but is grounded in lived experience – what Althusser calls "the real conditions of existence" (1969: 233) and Eagleton "that basic realism and intelligence of popular life" (2007 [1991]: 13). Yet, simultaneously, ideology does not convey the true nature of the material conditions of our existence, rather it establishes an "imaginary" (Althusser, 2001: 111) relationship between them as a form of mediation. An ideology vies for legitimacy in relation to a cornucopia of other experiences and interpretations of the world; therefore, it is important to approach its heterogeneous content not as separate realities or myths but as conflicting interpretations of the same data sets: "we can suggest," observes Eagleton, "that ideology concerns less signification than conflicts within the field of signification" (2007 [1991]: 11). Therefore, to consider the ideology of genre is to understand that while the latter functions a system for organising cultural material, it is also a means of creating realities.

The question that has been bubbling beneath my argument so far is to what extent can genre be considered a measure of the real? To this I have posed, firstly, that genre is a structure that enmeshes and mediates culture with the material forces of production and, broadly speaking, society in general. At the same time, genre is always ideological and therefore is the product and producer particular world views. In this respect, it has both the capacity to pacify "the masses" and resist hegemonic control of the cultural apparatuses; it is capable of establishing heterogeneous systems within itself, while, paradoxically, being stringently controlled by capitalism and dominant forms of bourgeois hegemony. I would like to conclude this preliminary sketch of my methodology, then, by

returning again to Dick and what is to be a central issue in this thesis: genre and its relation to reality. It will be of little surprise that a writer as imaginative and provocative as Dick establishes the question of reality at the very centre of his writing: "The two basic topics that fascinate me are 'What is reality?' and 'What constitutes the authentic human being?'" (1995 [1978]: 260). The question of the authentic human being, Dick notes in the same essay, is one that folds into that of reality, as the production of reality has a direct effect on the conditions of the former:

> the bombardment of pseudorealities begins to produce inauthentic humans very quickly, spurious humans – as fake as the data pressing at them from all sides. Fake realities will create fake humans. Or, fake humans will generate fake realities and then sell them to other humans, turning them, eventually, into forgeries of themselves. So we wind up with fake humans inventing fake realities and then peddling them to other fake humans. It is just a very large version of Disneyland. (1995: 264)

The worlds that Dick likes to depict in his stories are immersed in the evasive binary of real and fake, whether this is depicted in the model suburban houses and towns of the two 1950s novels discussed above; simulated or hallucinated realities, as exemplified in *A Maze of Death* (1970) and *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1974) respectively; forged artefacts and historical documents, as in *High Castle* and *The Penultimate Truth*; "real" humans and "fake" humanoid androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968; referred to as "*Do Androids?*" from here on); or the belief in the divine invasion of God juxtaposed against delusional paranoia, as manifests itself in the protagonist of *VALIS* (1980 [1978]). These worlds are under constant tension because of the way in which hegemonic values and meanings, which are perceived as fixed, are exposed to their own inherently contingent nature. "Reality," in the static received sense, is exposed as an incredibly fragile and potentially volatile state – the worlds that Dick favours are threadbare, decrepit, isolated, and spatially contorted. Thus Dick counterpoises hegemonic reality to an alternative conceptualisation:

reality as a site of struggle, where meaning must be fought for continuously and dialectically in relation to those who would seek to make it an unchangeable entity. The potential to pose alternatives to the dominant, static model of reality, Dick recognises, is the inherent strength of sf; we engage with it knowing that it is not real: "in science fiction no pretense is made that the worlds described are real. This is why we call it fiction" (1995: 265). Yet it is simultaneously this sense of dissociation or disjointedness from the real that instils sf with an inherent realness: "the strange thing is in some way, some real way, much of what appears under the title 'science fiction' is true" (Dick, 1995: 265). What Dick infers here by the "truth" of sf is that it has the potential to expose what is presented by the dominant culture as "tradition," "natural order," "art," and "literature". These concepts, as we encounter them in contemporary society, are reified models; like the constructed suburbs in *Time Out of Joint*, they are facsimiles of an absolute reality, whose need to exercise containment and control cannot help but expose their own existential contradictions.

For Dick, the fundamental characteristic of sf is not its tropes and associated signifiers but its ability to produce a "newness" that resists received notions of a "natural order": "Joy is the essential and final ingredient of science fiction, the joy of discovery of newness" (Dick, 1995 [1981]: 100). What Dick sets out here is a utopian potential within sf, which is able to produce new visions through its generic components; in opposition to what bourgeois culture sees as genre's limitations, Dick perceives these as the building blocks which facilitate its continuing progression. Dick's jubilatory expression of sf's potential brings us to a final point of consideration, namely, that of the overtly "political" nature of sf and, in a broader context, genre. Part of the "truth" of sf is rooted in the dislocation of its content from what is conventionally called "reality," but this can only be a useful insight if it is understood to mean that the utopian potential of sf is harnessed when the genre is applied against the logic of the dominant culture's conception of "fiction". To do this, however, requires us to understand that the content of sf cannot exist without direct correspondence with its form and the history of its production as it is positioned within the cultural hierarchy of bourgeois culture – i.e. as a cheap "mass cultural" commodity, as opposed to "art".

The flaking veneer and crude joins that we find in the worlds of Dick's stories, are themselves metafictional engagements with the history of genre products and their production – in both sf and elsewhere: the adventure story, hardboiled detective fiction, the Western. In turn, this historically-engaged method of interacting and (re)constructing worlds from the artefacts of genre's past exposes the baleful "naturalism" of what Mark Fisher calls "capitalist realism": "Capitalist realism as I understand it cannot be confined to art or to the quasi-propagandistic way in which advertising functions. It is more like a pervasive *atmosphere*, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action" (2009: 16; emphasis in original). Significantly, Fisher does not limit capitalist realism to cultural production, but rather presents it as an "atmosphere" that pervades the whole of global capitalist society. Thus he situates this phenomenon as a *condition* of advanced capitalism, both in the sense that it constitutes a pact or rule of law and, simultaneously, that it is a pervasive pathology embedded in social life.

Just as Dick believes that within sf there exists the potential for newness – a hope that is under constant threat by terminal sameness – Fisher's concern is whether in advanced capitalist society there is actually the potential to think of viable alternatives:

> If capitalist realism is so seamless, and if current forms of resistance are so hopeless and impotent, where can an effective challenge come from? A moral critique of capitalism, emphasizing the ways in which it leads to suffering, only reinforces capitalist realism. Poverty, famine and war can be presented as an inevitable part of reality, while the hope that these forms of suffering could be eliminated easily painted as naïve utopianism. Capitalist realism can only be threatened if it is shown to be in some way inconsistent or untenable; if, that is to say, capitalism's ostensible 'realism' turns out to be nothing of the sort. (2009: 16)

What Fisher sets out here is a more direct articulation of what I have described takes place in the dialectic of "real" and "fake" in Dick's writing. For Fisher, the more advanced capitalism becomes, the more it absorbs forms of cultural production into it and the more control it has over social life. As a result, the more we are subjected to capitalist realism, the fewer options we have to resist it and pose alternatives to it. Thus the best means of contesting capital and forging new realities is to expose the contradictions in capital's construction of reality. As Fisher is right to remind us, "As any number of radical theorists from Brecht through to Foucault and Badiou have maintained, emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a 'natural order,' must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be mere contingency just as it must make what was previously deemed impossible to seem attainable" (2009: 17). It is only right, however, that included alongside this tradition of radical theory is that of radical sf; from Wells to Stapledon to Dick and beyond, writers of radical sf have been driven by the need to expose what is inconsistent about the dominant ideologies and forms of cultural logic that undergird capitalism.

When Fisher frames capitalist realism as an atmosphere, he denotes something that is pervasive in the way that it breaches both cultural production and swarms over the conditions of work and education, as well as our thoughts and actions in general. Historically, the prevailing atmosphere in Dick's work is set slightly earlier than Fisher's. For the latter, capitalist realism is something that emerges in the long neoliberal comedown from the radical political and artistic practices of the late 1970s, as exemplified in the Bologna riots, post-punk, and the miners' strikes. Dick, on the other hand, orients his work primarily through the historical "referent" of 1950s America. In this respect, compared to Fisher, Dick is less invested in the ebbing of forms of radical political and artistic practice – although his engagement with American political history is both fascinating and complex – than he is with the reverse effect: the dominant ideology of 1950s America as an ideological vacuum. Thus, for Dick, it is Disneyland, which opened its gates for the first time in the late 1950s, that encapsulates the distinct atmosphere of a dominant American capitalism that flourishes in the decade-or-so proceeding World War Two. Everything that Dick found paradoxically

intriguing and disconcerting about the world in which he lived is captured by Disneyland: a depthless site of pastiche, pseudoworlds, and naturalised mechanical fakes ("fake fakes" [Dick, 1995: 264]); a perpetual California, which, like the sf he sought to write, conveys a fundamental truth about the world in which he lived. Yet where Disneyland differs from the universes Dick loves to create is that it is a site of consolidation and containment; its surface glitz and sensual abundance, like that of the supermarket, the shopping mall, or Las Vegas casino, simultaneously exposes its experiential limitations and imaginative poverty. Disneyland is the archetype of that which wants to naturalise its "fakery" – its simulated aesthetics, but also its particular determination of "leisure" and "fun" – and in doing so make its vapid experience and shallow glamour admissible as "whimsical," "nostalgic," and "escapist". Dick's writing turns this practice on its head through its meta-relation with genre as an organisational structure; we are never permitted to simply step outside genre as an organisational structure, thus the radical impact this has on the process of reading is that we are never able to slip into the reified fantasies condensed within Disneyland, just as it prevents Dick's texts from being subsumed into the amorphous metaphysical realm of "art".

Criticism and Genre

In an essay discussing 1950s dystopian sf and its engagement with the Cold War's looming nuclear threat, Dick gives us his most enduring dictum: "A doom story never offers a solution to the problem: It merely utters the problem over and over again. Well, assuming we accept the existence of the problem (the approaching war), perhaps a more realistic or at least more valuable function would be to seek, in our science fiction stories partial solutions to the menace" (Dick in Sutin, 1995: 55). Later, Dick appraised his work as exploring two fundamental questions: "'What is reality?' and 'What is the authentic human?'" (Dick in Sutin, 1995: 278). Yet these can only be comprehended in relation to the tentative utopianism presented in the above. How, then, does this relate to genre and the way in

which critics approach and organise Dick's work? In the remaining pages of this chapter, I examine some key organisational problems with criticism on Dick and offer an alternative approach that fixes his engagement with the structures of genre as the central means of his social critique. We can see evidence of this already in the quotation above, as Dick contemplates how to fulfil the sf writer's responsibility to engage with contemporary politics, but without simply rehashing fantasies of the worst possible scenario – in this case, nuclear apocalypse. His answer is to build on existing approaches within sf in order to present *another way*. Throughout his oeuvre, Dick complicates his approach in increasingly imaginative ways, bringing in genre materials from outside sf, as well as reconstituting and responding to his own work. It is by way of this that he is able to maintain strange and compelling engagements with the shifting conditions of capital and its constituent ideologies.

To understand the way in which Dick approaches genre, we need to consider the highly contested nature of sf as a form of cultural production. I have already touched on the sf canon in regards to Dick's centrality to it; this, however, needs some clarification, as conflicting definitions of sf inevitably create their own histories and their own canons. The brief sketch that follows outlines some of the major definitional shifts within European and U.S. sf history, which is intended to demonstrate the contingency, volatility, and selectivity at the heart of sf, rather than provide an extensive foray into the minutiae of these histories, which, for practical reasons, cannot be done here.[6] Consider, then, as a starting point, the philology of the term "science fiction". Its generally accepted etymology is attributed to the publisher Hugo Gernsback, who pioneered the American sf pulp magazine in the 1920s. Yet any strictly philological definition of sf – one that only includes the American pulps, whose so-called "Golden Age" Milner locates between 1937 and the mid-1950s (2012: 55) – would mean excluding huge amounts of material both before and after this time frame which are considered sf. Notably, the problem of sf's historicity is evinced within the very pages of

[6] For comprehensive studies of the cultural and critical histories of European and U.S. sf, see Luckhurst (2005), Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* (2012 [2006]), Milner (2012), Bould and Sheryl Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* (2012), Brian Baker, *Science Fiction* (2014), Nick Hubble and Aris Mousoutzanis, *The Science Fiction Handbook* (2013).

Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*, whose first issue reprinted stories by Edgar Allen Poe and H.G. Wells, two figures who are widely considered as pivotal to sf's development. Unsurprisingly, exactly how far back sf starts is as contested as what sf "means" today. Those who align the genre with the older mode of Utopia, as in the case of Darko Suvin, one of sf's most influential theorists, find a firm historical base in Thomas More's eponymous text. However, positioning sf as an appendage of Utopia, while carrying some theoretical weight, has the precarious effect of leaning into the literary pedigree of the likes of More, David Bellamy, William Morris, and H.G. Wells at the expense of the sf that exploded through the pulps. Adopting such an approach creates the bizarre condition of ruling out what is popularly regarded as sf – a sf without superheroes, *Star Trek*, and *Star Wars*. Freedman, a critic close to Suvin, claims that "Many of the major literary values for which science fiction is generally read are very much at work in Dante's and Milton's efforts to take the reader beyond the boundaries of his or her own mundane environment" (2000: 15), although he sees sf proper as emerging through the technological revolution of the novel and bourgeois revolution at the end of the nineteenth century. Luckhurst, however, places the establishment of sf as a genre almost a century later than Freedman, attributing its ascendancy to a prominent cultural mode to the technological advances, upheavals, and anxieties that played out in urban centres across Europe and the United States during the *fin de siècle*. "SF," Luckhurst argues, "is a literature of technologically saturated societies. A genre that can therefore emerge only relatively late in modernity" (2005: 3). As these contesting theories go to show, efforts to define and redefine sf itself, as well as continual reassessments of the structure of genre itself, are fundamental to sf's constitution.

In the 1960s, the avant-garde English New Wave sought radically to respond to and reconfigure the preconceptions of sf forged in the pulps, the latter having become international shorthand for sf as a whole. Writing as guest editor for *New Worlds* magazine in 1962, J.G. Ballard launched a frontal assault on what he saw as an increasingly myopic, unimaginative, and juvenile genre, preoccupied almost exclusively with tales of outer space (attributing the latter to the legacy of Wells). What he proposed instead was that the untapped potential of sf lay not in this outward view

– the increasing reality of landing on the moon, for example, did not promise to revitalise the genre – but on the alien frontiers of earthly and psychological "inner space": "I'd like to see more psycho-literary ideas, more meta-biological and meta-chemical concepts, more of the remote, sombre half-worlds one glimpses in the paintings of schizophrenics, all in all a complete speculative poetry and fantasy of science" (Ballard, 1962: 118). For Ballard, sf's future lay in the Freudian unconscious and Surrealism's schizophrenic perspective. Combining these to form his theoretical keystone, Ballard developed a methodology that was able to confront the increasingly sexualised social relation to the commodity as the more traditional hierarchies of art were eroded and eroticised by advertisement.

Nearly thirty years after Ballard's article in *New Worlds* – the magazine that would become the vessel for the English New Wave under the editorship of Moorcock – a comparable cry for a radical reassessment of sf was issued by Bruce Sterling in his manifesto 'Slipstream'. Sterling takes Ballard's concerns over sf's stagnation and irrelevance a step further, claiming that by the end of the 1970s its chance to become "worthy literature" had passed, precisely because "writers have now learned to adapt SF's best techniques to their own ends" (1989). By the late 1980s, Sterling argues, sf was less a concern of writers than it was of publishers and books sellers. Here he makes the distinction between a "Category" and a "Genre": the former is a "marketing term, denoting rack-space," whereas the latter is "a spectrum of work united by an inner identity, a coherent esthetic, a set of conceptual guidelines, an ideology if you will" (Sterling, 1989). Indeed it is sf's identity – aesthetic and ideological – that Sterling sees as having dissipated. For contemporary writers, Sterling claims, sf is a "dead issue" (1989). This, he argues, is because the publishing industry and mass media have dissolved sf's potency, while sf's best literary techniques have been adopted by other writers outside the world of sf – by writers whose work estranges realist practices but is not recognisably sf, like Margaret Atwood, J.M. Coetzee, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The bleed of sf techniques beyond its borders is identified tentatively by Sterling in terms of a strangeness or plasticity that characterises postmodern reality: "[slipstream] is a kind of writing which simply makes you feel very strange; the way that living in the late twentieth century makes you feel […] We could call this kind of

fiction Novels of Postmodern Sensibility, but that looks pretty bad on a category rack" (1989). Thus ubiquitous publishing industry categorisations and the migration of the formerly innovative, unsettling aspects of sf writing into the mainstream lead Sterling to his evasive, deconstructive formulation of slipstream as a way of re-evaluating sf and the very concept of genre in the hyper-consumerist, postmodern culture of the late 1980s. Slipstream, like a half-glimpsed form appearing momentarily in our peripheral vision, obscures itself in its very appearance: metaphorically, it is not an identifiable nation state but "A blithely stateless cosmopolitanism" predicated on "a kind of writing which simply makes you feel very strange" (Sterling, 1989).There is no clear motivation behind this strangeness, nor can it be easily quantified. Indeed, such a phenomenon is characterised first and foremost by its own absence or non-being: slipstream, as Sterling describes it, is an ethereal literary vapour trail streaming from the back of the plummeting hulk of genre sf.

However, for all its compelling rhetoric and tantalising ambiguity, 'Slipstream' presents a whole host of contradictions, some intriguing, others betraying an underlying incoherence and temporizing brought on by the anxieties of neoliberalism and the closing of the Cold War. Indeed, there is an intoxicating ahistoricism surrounding Sterling's manifesto that draws comparison to Francis Fukuyama's triumphalist announcement in the *End of History and the Last Man* (1992) that the collapse of the Soviet Union spelled the ultimate affirmation of capitalism's primacy as *the* dominant global political-economic system: the end of history, in this sense, meant that from this point onwards history "stopped" because capitalism had "proved" that it no longer needed to defend its legitimacy against other socio-economic models. Indeed, despite its radical rhetoric, Sterling's pronouncement of sf's end is very much a capitulation to late capitalist hegemony; his critique of consumerism is problematically bound to an anti-utopian impulse which demands that we simply accept the contemporary social order. We can historicise this problematic contradiction within Sterling's manifesto by comparing the latter's doom crying to struggles taking place within sf publishing during the 1980s, as is evinced in the case of the bookseller Dalton Books. As Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah explains in an interview with the sf and f writer Samuel R. Delany, in the mid-1980s

Dalton Books was the largest bookseller in the U.S. (by the end of the decade it had been taken over by Barnes and Noble), but it "refused to stock his [Delaney's] books or those of other science-fiction and fantasy authors who dealt with gay content, since novels in those genres are often read by high-school students" (2011). As Ghansah observes, this policy was an even graver act of censorship in 1980s, due to the prevalence of the AIDS epidemic. But the trouble that belies Sterling's proposed abandonment of sf is, as Delaney puts it in the same interview, "'Science fiction isn't just thinking about the world out there. It's also thinking about how that world might be – a particularly important exercise for those who are oppressed, because if they're going to change the world we live in, they – and all of us – have to be able to think about a world that works differently'" (Delaney in Ghansah, 2011). The internal conflicts at the centre of sf, which demand that it continuously engage with itself – with its aesthetics, history, and politics – is the kernel of what makes it so politically adept in the ongoing struggle for class, racial, and gender equality. Therefore, for Sterling to dissolve this into the trace of signifiers that supplement a once dominant ideology – sf, he claims, "is a lot like the contemporary Soviet Union; the sprawling possessor of a dream that failed" (1989) – is to simultaneously ignore the cultural importance of sf and its sheer historical adaptability.

Although Delaney is in many ways a different type of sf writer to Dick – for one, the pleasurable nature of prose style is essential to Delaney, whereas for Dick, style is always already a condition of genre to be playfully engaged with – the former's statement presents clear parallels to Dick's notion of "partial solutions to the menace". Delaney's argument is, indeed, overlooked by Sterling, who, for all his attention to the postmodern and heterogeneity, fails to comprehend the uneven nature of sf's development in relation to its social critique. A pertinent example of this oversight is provided by Donna Haraway's famous feminist text *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), published only four years prior to 'Slipstream'. Here Haraway constructs an "ironic political myth" (1985: 5) around the science-fictional figure of the cyborg as a way of challenging social reality's claim to "realness," while recoding the conventional discourse of socialist feminism through its boundary-disrupting posthumanism. Notably, Haraway's rendering of the political and theoretical terrain of the

cyborg acknowledges the importance of 1960s and 1970s feminist and queer sf in staking out this territory (Haraway, 1985: 52n28). But what is really interesting here is that *A Cyborg Manifesto* opens up a hybridized border zone, a contradictory landscape whose organic-machinic dialectic provides insight into late capitalism's repressive apparatuses. In this respect, the spatiality of Haraway's text is a counterpoint to the egress through which slipstream attempts to escape. Thus, while both writers traverse neoliberal territories marked by the gaps and absences of unresolvable contradictions, Haraway presents a compelling case for sf's mechanics as blueprints for surviving in a posthuman environment.

At this point we can look beyond slipstream to the historical present, in which left-wing science fiction enjoys primacy in both scholarship and on the physical and digital shelves of booksellers. Here Sterling's triumphal end of sf is positioned as both agent and witness of a conjuring: sf's own convocation of Marx's ghost. Indeed, neoliberalism in the post-Cold War era has brought about its own specific social and cultural conditions, with its own forms of oppression and crises. The virtual space of the market, the material-digital hybrid of big data, the slow violence of austerity, the anxiety of environmental catastrophe, are just a handful of conditions that characterise our present state of affairs, which require an organised and articulate response. As a genre whose imaginary is embroiled with politics of scale, time, and space, sf cannot help but facilitate the means for a response. Furthermore, the contradictions of a dominant political ideology that valorises Enlightenment progress while orientating its means of production towards repetition requires a literary mode that is accustomed to both logic-warping estrangements and plasticised reality, as well as the grinding impoverishment embodied in the dialectic between labour power and technology. There is a further irony to Sterling's despair and the politics of contemporary sf, the latter having returned to some of the most maligned aspects of the genre: Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars* (1993), for example, uses the subject of terraforming as a way of addressing environmental issues and corporate greed, but, as Brett Scott (2014) observes, it has served as a prescient anticipation of the contested territories and subversive practices of crypto currencies. The emergence of the New

Weird is also pertinent in this respect. As much associated with f as it is with sf, New Weird fiction takes its cues from the stories of H.P. Lovecraft and the pulp magazine *Weird Fiction*, employing the uncanny nature of the weird and a meta-textual engagement with pulp detritus to create sprawling genre landscapes, dislocated cities within cities, and estranging zones. There are few better examples of these characteristics than China Miéville's New Crobuzon novels: *Perdido Street Station* (2000), and *The Iron Council* (2004). In these texts the city of New Crobuzon, a city state situated in the vast world of Bas-Lag, incorporates radical genre-play into its anachronistic architecture and composite geography, obliterating the clean lines and polished facades of the neoliberal cityscape. In doing so, Miéville unearths the palimpsest structure of urban space, dissolving the obfuscating gloss of political spin and corporate marketing into the cracked and uneven landscape they try to obscure.

This short account of sf's rifts and oscillations offers an opportunity to synthesise the discussion of Dick in the first half of this chapter with the political characteristics of sf as I have presented them here. I have said that the ideological foundation of Dick's work is his belief that sf proposes "partial solutions to the menace; and here some more attention must be given to the crucial nature of this incompleteness. In the above I describe this as a tentative utopian impulse, the glimpse of hope that punctures the artifice of oppressive consensus reality. But Dick's phrase also teases out the evasiveness of sf's centre. There is clear evidence that sf is constantly engaged with its own history and the contradictions derived from it. In this case, sf is a partial solution because it is driven by its innate understanding of its own fragmentations. Moreover, the shifting nature of the genre's internal structure makes it particularly suited to confronting its commodity form. This aspect of sf's incompleteness is both its great strength – it knows the impurity of art, just as it exploits the reality of fiction, and so is able to uses these dislocations to open up new interpretative space – and terminal weakness – it cannot unshackle itself from the commodity relation, no matter how radical its content; for all its subversive impulses, it cannot write capital away. In this respect, the formula that Dick provides allows us to see that sf in its divergent epistemologies and destabilising ontologies

presents a fundamental method of demystification, but it is only a part of a complex set of relations that constitute radical political thought.

Sf criticism as we know it today was popularised in the mid-1970s, thanks largely to the work of Darko Suvin. In 1972, Suvin published the essay 'On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre', which sets out his theory of "cognitive estrangement," in the following year he became editor of the journal *Science Fiction Studies* (referred to as "*SF Studies*" from here on), and at the end of the decade published the influential monograph *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979; "*Metamorphoses*" from here on). Bould terms this moment of scholarly sf's arrival as the "Suvin event" (2009: 18), a sardonic acknowledgment of both the importance of Suvin's contribution to the field and the need to challenge his subsequent dominance over it. Milner gives further clarity to this matter, writing "the core critical approach specific to the genre, against which almost everything else has been obliged to define itself, remains that established by Darko Suvin" (2012: 1). Two other critics form part of what I will refer to here as the "Suvin group": Freedman, who I have made reference to already, and Fredric Jameson. Both are mainstays in sf criticism and have made considerable contributions to the study of Dick's work. *SF Studies* has published four of Freedman's articles on Dick, his monograph *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (2000) dedicates a whole chapter to Dick's style and includes an essay on *High Castle*, his essay on *Blade Runner*, 'Marxism, Cinema and some Dialectics of Science Fiction and Film Noir', is included in the collection *Red Planets*. Jameson, who is one of the most renowned Marxist theorists of recent times, has published work on sf and Dick specifically, dating back to the first *SF Studies*' special edition, and has subsequently addressed Dick's work in his seminal *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) and his study of sf *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005). Given that the work of the Suvin group has become an increasing point of contestation within sf scholarship, what I address here is the impact of this debate on Dick, looking at the relationship between critical theory and its categorical groupings of Dick's sizeable body of work. My emphasis is that while the work of the Suvin group has provided us with some useful analytical

tools, it has also imposed a particularly rigid critical framework on Dick's writing. As we shall see, the work of the Suvin group tends to prefer the novels Dick produced during the 1960s. While there are exceptions to this rule, their general focus on a core group of 1960s' texts has the effect of making the rest of Dick's work appear peripheral. It is certainly true that Dick's writing varies in quality and that his oeuvre is large in comparison to most mainstream writers. However, exclusionary approaches are detrimental to understanding the way in which Dick's use of genre develops over time. In Chapter One, for example, I trace how Dick's invocation of the American frontier develops in his work: from his early sf short stories, through his social realist or "mainstream" novels, to the point at which it crystalizes in the extraordinary sf-Western *Martian Time-Slip* (1964). Therefore, while I retain focus on a small number of key texts, the methodology that I employ is designed to track the historical developments taking place within Dick's work. This, in turn, allows us to see how Dick uses genre as a means of communicating and challenging the material conditions of the society in which he lived.

Suvin's most influential contribution to sf scholarship is his theory of cognitive estrangement, which finds its first elaborated expression in *Metamorphoses*. Cognitive estrangement is Suvin's way of addressing two fundamental questions that anyone approaching sf analytically must ask: "How do we know this is sf?" and "What does sf do?" While shamefully oversimplified, these are the basic starting points for embarking on sf criticism. The sf text presents us with a world that is estranged from the "empirical environment" (1979: 18) of the reader. This is what makes it fundamentally different from the realist novel, for example, whose environments, even if they lie historically beyond our own, are familiar to us – a Victorian range is still comprehensible to us as a means of cooking, while the "replicator" in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is much less so. But, for Suvin, the sf text does not just present us with something different or other for the sake of it, or in a way that is completely removed from all logical coherence; in other words, the sf text cannot do what the folk tale does with the magic carpet, rather its estrangements must be latently real or cognitive.

What makes the environments of sf tales so different from and yet still relatable to our own is what Suvin calls the "novum" – a term he borrows from Ernst Bloch. The novum constitutes "a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality" (1979: 64). It can take the form of a novel invention, an alien agency, a strange new set of relations, or a far out setting. These, importantly, are always historicised. Take, for example, the centrality of pet ownership in *Do Androids?* In the dilapidated future world of Dick's story, owning an authentic animal is the principle status symbol amongst the bourgeoisie. As with all of Dick's stories from this period, the historical referent of this neurotic consumer landscape is 1950s suburbia; therefore, pets take on the role of the automobile or the refrigerator, the estrangement being the inversion of the organic and the mechanical. Thus the novel's protagonist, Rick Deckard, does not yearn for new home appliances, but for a real sheep, like the one he used to have. This last detail is important, as it betrays the historical distortion that codifies Dick's work: the historical referent is always a deliberately nostalgic one. In this case Deckard's desire is a completely nostalgic one, pertaining to an authenticity that in our empirical reality constitutes a contradiction in post-war culture: the ideology that conflates materialism with authentic living – the realisation of the pursuit of happiness – is facilitated by the Fordian production line. Thus the novum does not simply invert the organic and the mechanical, but shows us a completely new set of cultural and economic relations in the consumption of animals. Rather than simply plant 1950s consumerism into a future setting, the novum allows us to comprehend how capital conditions our understanding of authenticity through the commodity relation. It is here that we can see the heuristic emphasis of cognitive estrangement – sf as "an educational literature" (Suvin, 1972: 381) – which, for Suvin, constitutes its political use-value.

Yet while the above gives us a glimpse of how Suvin's methodology can help to approach Dick's work and sf more generally as a way of confronting the shifting material circumstances and cultural logic of capitalism, his theory raises a number of issues. These are addressed both in the work of critics adopting his methods as well as his detractors. Freedman, for example, plants himself

firmly on the side of Suvin, arguing that the latter's theorising of sf is "not only fundamentally sound, but indispensable" (2000: 17). At the same time, however, he argues that two adjustments need to be made to the former's theory.

His first amendment addresses the empirical nature of cognition, which Suvin presents as an exteriorised epistemological category: a sf story must make sense in terms that cohere with the natural sciences, rather than reduce them to magic. What Freedman offers in its place is a "cognition effect" (2000: 18), which allows a certain amount of reflexivity and epistemological slippage. The example he gives is that of Isaac Asmiov's short story 'The Dying Night', which adopts the since-disproven theory that Mercury turns on its axis at the same rate that it orbits the sun. Freedman's argument is that the empirical disproval of this theory does nothing to alter its status as sf; this, he posits, demonstrates that it is cognition effect rather than cognition at work within sf.

Freedman's second reconstitution attempts to resolve the contradiction that cognitive estrangement presents to the philological definition of sf found in the pulps. It is clear that a great deal of what is generally considered sf does not meet the criteria that Suvin sets out: *Star Wars*, for example, is the archetypal example of "passing off a juvenile idea of magic for cognition" (Suvin, 1979: 24), but it is clearly science-fictional. What is more, cognition and estrangement are "not only actually present in all fiction, but are structurally crucial to the possibility of fiction and even representation in the first place" (2000: 22). Therefore, the cognitive estrangement that Suvin delineates has to be understood as one tendency within a field of other genre tendencies that makes up the heterogeneous whole of a text. This means that the sf text is not simply one in which the dialectic between cognition and estrangement is present, but where the latter is "the dominant generic tendency within the overdetermined textual whole" (2000: 20). This means that rather than an either-or formulation, Freedman gives us an adjustable scale, which is intended to make room for the pulp sf that Suvin excludes.

There are, however, two fundamental problems with these adjustments which, in turn, will help us to understand some of the theoretical problems that Suvin and Freedman transfer onto

Dick's work. In the first case, the displacement of cognition effect from cognition is subsequently contradicted when Freedman recouples the two: "the readiest means of producing a cognition effect is precisely through cognition itself; that is, through rationality as the latter is understood from a critical point of view" (2000: 18-19). As Bould iterates, by emphasising critical reason over the range of shared rhetorical devices that sf uses to create its cognition effect, Freedman "unintentionally reproblematises generic discrimination by reasserting the importance of external epistemological judgements on textual features" (2002: 301). The second issue is that despite his best intentions, Freedman's resituating of cognitive estrangement within a textual field of generic tendencies still does not allow the pulps and their related materials to be reinstated as sf: "any text in which cognitive estrangement is weak is likely to be dominated by some other generic tendency and therefore not be sf" (Bould, 2002: 301). There is, however, an implied answer to the latter in Freedman's examinations of specific sf texts, which, Bould observes, treats them as "works of critical theory performed narratively rather than discursively" (2002: 301).

What clashes here between Suvin and Freedman's formulations of cognitive estrangement and Dick's oeuvre is the latter's relation to the pulp tradition. Dick, like Ballard, Sterling, and Suvin, bemoaned sf's juvenile content, writing in 1969: "SF remains preadult, and therefore appeals […] to preadults" (Dick in Sutin, 1995: 67). Yet his writing is born out of the pulps, for which he wrote diligently throughout the 1950s, incorporating their threadbare scenery as simulations, embellishing the gaudiness and extravagance of their costumes, indulging in their infamy as culture's trash products, and harnessing their material detritus as an entropic force. The strength of Dick's work from the 1950s and 60s, the latter in particular, is derived precisely from his playful interactions with these conditions; this continues into the 1970s and 80s, but with greater metatextuality and a shift in historical referent from the 1950s (the end of pulp's "Golden Age"), to the countercultural "long" 1960s. At its most indulgent, this sense of play presents us with images that we would expect to find amongst the lowliest iterations of sf. Consider, for example, the following description of a waitress in *Lies Inc* (1984 [1966]):

> the maitre d' called to a waitress wearing the lace stockings and partial jacket-vest combination now popular; it left one breast, the right, exposed, and its nipple was elegantly capped by a Swiss ornament with many minned [miniaturised] parts; the ornament, shaped like a large golden pencil eraser, played semi-classical music and lit up in a series of attractive light patterns which focussed on the floor ahead of her, lighting her way so that she could pass among the closely-placed tiny tables of the restaurant. (Dick,1984: 46)

Here the ironic utility of the Swiss ornament buried under its own decadence is much closer to Jameson's conceptualisation of postmodern pastiche than parody: Dick embraces the dead styles of sf's recent past, its boyish juvenilia, the dead ends of its doom narratives, looping them back at us in garish, disjointed, and unsettling reproductions. But while Dick often indulges in metatextual playfulness, it is an aspect of his writing that carries serious weight. The partially-exposed body and the "semi-classical" music betray an internal contradiction: the former imbues the waitress with an accentuated bodily fullness, while the degraded nature of the music implies insubstantiality. The obvious indication is that material abundance exists at the expense of a reciprocal cultural impoverishment: the half-nude body reveals only a contrast of surfaces and the musical ornament configures music as a material accessory.

We encounter an inverted image of the above in *Ubik* (1969 [1966]). In this novel, the phantasmagorical world in which most of the story takes place is sustained by a boy deity who feeds on the life force of others, leaving a trail of withered corpses in his wake. Christopher Palmer's (2003: 133-145) analysis of eating as a metaphor for consumerism is insightful here. Palmer observes that Dick's novels are full of people consuming foodstuffs or substitutes which are degraded and offer little or no bodily nourishment. This, he argues, presents a contradictory unevenness between Dick's technologically advanced societies and the debased nature of their consumables. Here, according to Palmer, Dick's work shows us how "consumption, like production, has become dematerialized. We

consume not foodstuffs but images, or items of information […] When they consume, his characters experience a lack and this is a sign that things have gone wrong for them" (2003: 137). Neither is there any hope of retreating from this insubstantial world into a nostalgic materialism, which is itself just another supplement to ingest. Instead, Dick historicises the lack inherent in consumption by subverting the clichéd image of the U.S. in the 1950s: "a rise in wealth, unaccompanied by an abundance of good things to spend it on; a feeling of increased power, technological and financial, issuing a kind of bewilderment or unease, as the power cannot be applied to the right points and the money cannot buy what one dimly remembers as a decent meal" (2003: 138). In a consumer society, real nourishment, be it bodily or spiritual, is continually deferred, and the supplements that keep us going simultaneously hollow us out. The quick turnaround of producing pulp magazines – their written content and their printed form – invokes the kind of junk food or speed rush metaphor of instant gratification, which cannot sustain mind or body. However, if pulps cannot sustain, if they are inherently juvenile and underdeveloped, they make little secret of this; they come to us already degraded, aware of their inherent lack. This provides a kind of substantial insubstantiality that is the inverse of authoritative claims to reality and authority, the latter supplementing lack with a fetishizing of an always unattainable authenticity.

The above demonstrates what is novel about Dick's writing; that is to say, it shows the unique way that Dick exposes the limits of genre frameworks and problematizes their claims of wholeness. In this case, the above demonstrates that by repurposing pulp sf and exposing gaps in Literature, Dick presents a kind of fiction that is significantly more "real" than either. In this respect, Freedman is helpful in positing that what characterises Dick's prose "is the way that casualness and estrangement work together to suggest the routine commodification [of an estranged technology]" (2000: 38). This has two effects: the first is to flatten out what is estranging into a strangely mundane sensation; the second and more important is that commodification is itself estranged, evoking "the fetishistic weirdness on which this superficially familiar process is based" (2000: 38). Thus Dick's use of language creates a critical discourse that operates both at the micro level of the sentence and the

macro level of the text itself. However, while Freedman's theorising of Dick's writing style is inherently useful, it still suffers from its exclusion of "low" cultural practices, choosing to sacrifice them in their entirety in order to maintain the Suvinian line of sf criticism. This has a bizarre effect of excluding Dick's work from the influence of other sf texts, or from it being able to take its own critical position on other works from within the field of sf. By this token, we would have to assume that Dick's critique of capital and of the commodity in particular is derived from the purely non-literary realms of the material and economic analysis, to which all biographical and autobiographical sources stand in opposition.

What I have shown in this foray into Suvin and Freedman is that both privilege a certain type of literary sf. For Suvin, qualitatively "good" sf is that which carries over the socio-political tendency of utopian fiction into a temporally rather than spatially oriented estrangement. The historical transition from utopia to sf is, for Suvin, as it is generally accepted amongst sf scholars, located at the turn of the twentieth century. This is by no means where stories about the future "begin," but, as Adam Roberts explains, it is here that they "became a common trope" (2012: 122). Utopia and sf are, then, entwined, but historically and materially distinct; therefore, the sf of the mid-twentieth century that Suvin endorses is that which produces a utopian impulse, rather than resembling the doctrinal utopias of Thomas More, Edward Bellamy, and William Morris. This distinguishes the heuristic nature of sf, which is predicated on the dialectic between cognition and estrangement, and the "wide-eyed glance from here to there" (Suvin, 1988: 33) that Suvin ascribes to utopia.

Suvin's main criticism on Dick's oeuvre is split between two essays, which divide the latter's work chronologically. The first of these, 'The Opus: Artifice as Refuge and World View' (referred to as 'The Opus' from here on), was published in 1975 as an introductory essay to the first *SF Studies* special edition on Dick; the second, 'Goodbye and Hello: Differentiating in the Later Dick' appeared nearly three decades later, in 2002. Although there are clearly practical reasons for the existence of such a long gap – the works dealt with in the second essay had not been written in 1975 – its extent

betrays the lack of enthusiasm Suvin has for Dick's writing in the years spanning from 1966 to 1976.[7] The two essays respectively end and begin with the publication of *Ubik* in 1969. Taken together they break Dick's work into five periods: 1952-62, 1962-65, 1966-76, 1975-77, 1980-1982. The first period is referred to as a "one of apprenticeship" (Suvin in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay Jr., et al, 1992 [1975]: 2), during which Dick plies his hand at short-story writing and a handful of novels, culminating in *High Castle*; next comes the "high plateau" (1992: 2), and includes the three stand-out novels, *Martian Time-Slip*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964; referred to as "*Three Stigmata*" from here on), and *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965); the third grouping marks a period of "falling off" (1992: 2) or "crisis decade" (2002: 373), which Suvin initially marks off at 1974, but extends in his reappraisal to 1976, in order to include *Deus Irae* (1976); the fourth grouping is a second high point for Suvin, consisting of two novels: *A Scanner Darkly* (1977 [1975]) and *Radio Free Albemuth* (1985 [1975]); finally, the last grouping pertains to the so-called "VALIS Trilogy," three "theological" novels published at the end of Dick's career: *VALIS*, *The Divine Invasion* (1981 [1980]), and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982 [1981]).

Between them, the two essays give a fairly comprehensive overview of Dick's total novelistic output, as well as some of the more notable short stories. In 'The Opus', Suvin examines the "narrative polyphony" (1992: 5) of the high plateau texts, comparing them to the novels of the 1966-76 period which, he claims, tail off into vertiginous subjectivities and unsolvable ontological puzzle boxes. 'Goodbye and Hello', returns to Dick's late work, whose theological content is made more palatable to Suvin by post-1975 developments on the Left, specifically Liberation Theology and "a better understanding of Walter Benjamin" (2002: 369). My analysis of these essays aims to show how Suvin's critical methodology creates an uneven and overly prescriptive Dickian canon. By combining this with my subsequent reading of Jameson's rigid categorisations of Dick's corpus, I argue that a

[7] In 'Goodbye and Hello', Suvin makes some concessions for his harsh critiques of *Do Androids?* and *Ubik*. Conversely, he tempers his initial praise for *Three Stigmata*.

more fruitful approach to Dick's work is to pursue its continuities and discontinuities through its engagements with the structure of genre.

The first thing to comprehend in regards to 'The Opus' is that it engages specifically with Dick's deployment of groups of characters in his novels, a feature which, as Suvin rightly perceives, does not quite disappear, but begins to morph in the novels published after 1965. Notably, these groups tend not to be organised collectives or communities, but people thrown together by circumstance. Even Dick's more mechanical depictions of groups as slice-of-life social models are tinged with sf experimentation and have the obvious advantage of using multiple narrative foci to convey social, economic, and political tensions – what Raymond Williams terms "structures of feeling" – rather than binary antagonisms between oppressors and oppressed. Consider, for example, the late-1950s novel *Eye in the Sky* (1957), in which an accident involving an unfortunate tour group and a particle accelerator causes eight people to become mentally fused in the pop-psychology inner spaces of their unconsciouses. The story hops from one nightmarish mind-scape to the next, creating a spectrum of McCarthyist paranoia. Set in a dystopian surveillance state in which, presciently, Richard Nixon is president, the novel presents an astute estrangement of authoritarianism, where political paranoia both alienates and homogenises its subjects.

More complex, though, and of most interest to Suvin in this first half of Dick's corpus, are the novels of the "high plateau" and their close relation, *High Castle*. These employ multiple narrative foci which facilitate relational links between class perspectives and power relations. In doing so, Dick is able to convey the complex social structures underpinning capital and the repressive power that accompanies them. In the Japanese occupied zone of *High Castle*, for example, we have a relatively prescriptive class structure, with working-class Chinese and Americans at the bottom, American bourgeois collaborators and sycophants in the middle, and above them the political machinery of the occupancy, maintained by an army of Japanese bureaucrats. At the same time, the cold war between Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany extrapolates the internal class antagonisms within the Japanese zone onto an international political dynamic. The novel drops us in the middle of a power struggle

taking place within the Third Reich, the outcome of which will determine the fate of the world. Japanese survival relies on the clandestine activities of subversive elements within the German military, which, intriguingly, overlaps espionage and surveillance plot intrigues with the anxieties of the working-class American protagonists in their attempts to evade the authorities and establish meaningful forms of resistance. The divergent ideological drives within the hierarchical socio-economic structure partially reconfigure it as a network, susceptible to transgressions by ingenuity and struggle, but also by chance, intuition, and feeling. Therefore, even in this most top-down of power structures, there is still relative room for mobility. Notably, these gaps in the system are exploited by explicitly cultural rather than political means: the vision of an alternative present in the mis-en-abyme novel *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*; the working-class Jewish American Frank Frink's creation of an abstract art within the confines of cultural conservatism. Resistance is characterised by writing, reading, and crafting, emphasising interpretative rather than armed struggle, by which new value systems may be created.

Suvin's identification of these meticulously crafted systems is important, as is his tracing of their increasing complexity. By the time we get to *Martian Time-Slip*, "Dick's little man is being opposed not only to political and technological but also to economic power" (1992: 8). The latter, adapts the social structure of *High Castle* and complicates it with three contesting forms of capital: Leo Bohlen, a laissez-faire capitalist of the classic tycoon variety; Arnie Kott, a powerful and corrupt union leader on Mars; and the UN, the embodiment of entropic (super)state capitalism. Here the "economico-political spider" (1992: 8) spins its web out beyond the transplantation of European fascism into post-war American power. The time-slip of the novel, as I elaborate in the following chapter, moves back to the New Deal, in order to cast us forward into the mass culture of the mediatised 1960s. According to Paul Buhle, the attentiveness of the former to the consumerist needs of organized labour and the middle classes could not mask its inadequate treatment of the poor, "creating an unstated gap in economic citizenship" (2013 [1987]: 230), whereas the mass media

landscape brought with it both a pervasive new breed of marketing, as well as access to new and exciting subversive material.

It is in *Three Stigmata* that problems begin for Suvin. Palmer Eldritch is Dick's singular most horrifying creation: a "mad capitalist" (1992: 9) (as opposed to mad scientist) who returns to Earth as a quasi-mechanical inhuman Thing, bringing with him a new alien drug "Chew-Z". In the dystopian world of the novel, Martian colonists cannot survive the planet's desolate conditions without some means of mental escape. This is provided by one of Dick's amiable tycoon characters Leo Bulero, who has made his fortune by selling a drug called "Can-D," which is used in tandem with Barbie-like "Perky Pat" figures and model scenery. The drug allows the users to transplant their consciousness into the figure of either Pat or her male partner Walt. These hallucinations are experienced as a group, with each individual's consciousness making up part of a whole: the women are transmuted into Pat and the men into Walt. These shared experiences, though, are unsatisfactory: "'it's apartment, cars, sunbathing on the beach, ritzy clothes…we enjoyed it for a while, but it's not enough'" (Dick, 1964: 138). Furthermore, they lack individuality and privacy, turning the sexual relationship between Pat and Walt into a comically awkward group act.

Chew-Z is a far superior upgrade to the Can-D experience; it is private and individual, but comes at a terrible price. The user of Chew-Z cannot escape the hallucination, which becomes an infinite regress. The tell-tale sign that the experienced reality is not real, is the emanation of Palmer Eldritch. It is this most disconcerting representation of capital, however, that causes Suvin problems. The pervasiveness of Eldritch and his analogical embodiment of consumerism transgresses the carefully crafted narrative systems that organise the other texts of the high plateau and which *Three Stigmata* itself sets up only to undo. Here narrative polyphony and the rich social, cultural, and economic structures that it illuminates are effaced by ontological uncertainty. The repetition of the nightmare encounter with Eldritch creates a different kind of disruption to the temporal depth models of *High Castle* and *Martian Time-Slip*. The former radically alters our perception of depth – latent and manifest material cease to be distinguishable – and the subject is made to confront him or

herself through the image of the commodity, continuously without reprieve. However, Suvin argues that what emerges here is something other than political critique: “ontological preoccupations begin to weigh as heavily as, or more heavily than, the political dystopianism” (1992: 9). Yet this formulation of the ontological is particularly narrow, intended to preserve the sanctity of “objective” political epistemology, at the expense of confronting the disorienting experience of mediatised subjects navigating the landscape of global capital.

Suvin’s approach to Dick’s later work is more inclusive, if somewhat less remarkable in its readings. This is in spite of a notable methodological shift, preferring Shanonian information theory to cognitive estrangement as a means of negotiating epistemological and ontological themes. More important to us here, though, is Suvin’s emphasis that “Dick’s truth lies in his plot or fabula” (2002: 373). There is nothing wrong with desiring competent plotting, but my argument here is that Suvin reductively conflates the latter with *doing analysis*. In which case, texts that undermine, unhinge, or unstick conventions of writing fiction of any sort are doomed, regardless of their innovation, to “mystification” (2002: 393). In the final chapter of this thesis, I examine *VALIS*, a text that Suvin finds particularly frustrating. Analysing its structural intricacies, I argue that Dick’s novel presents a provoking dialectical account of religious belief, using this as a way of confronting the ideological effects of autobiographical writing on subjectivity and history. Here Dick’s methodology invokes narrative rifts, overlaps, convulsions, and overloads to approach gaps and inconsistencies inherent within language and interpretation. Thus the messiness of memory and, moreover, memory-driven fiction cannot hold up to the more conventional notion of plotting that Suvin has in mind. This tells us something else about Suvin’s general approach to sf: cognition and estrangement are held at too great a degree of separation. The decentralising effects of neoliberal economics that seep into U.S. life at the beginning of the 1970s accentuates this problem, as it places greater contingency on the relation between reality and fiction. What is more, the anteriority that estrangement is bestowed with cannot hold or is at least seriously degraded by what Jameson calls the “waning of affect” (1991: 11). This is addressed to some extent by the shift to information theory as Suvin’s favoured

methodology, which considers the interrelation between textual noise and signal, and the channel of distribution. But this shift does not shake off the more conventional notions of plot and narrative that Suvin falls back on time and again, which appear to overlook the cultural effects of shifts within capital, from Keynesianism to neoliberalism, that take place between the first and second of Dick's plateaus.

My analysis of the Suvin group ends with Jameson, who is in many respects the most contradictorily situated of the three Marxist critics. Jameson's stature as one of the world's most celebrated critical theorists has given Dick's work a stamp of scholarly approval and intellectual "worth" that could not be attained elsewhere. Nor has Jameson been particularly restrained in his praise for Dick's work, referring to him as the "Shakespeare of science fiction" (2005 [1982]: 345) and "the epic poet of entropy" (2005: 82). Yet his critical engagements with Dick's writing present us with problems as well as illuminations. My argument here addresses how Jameson's schematisation of Dick's oeuvre is overly constrained, but can be rectified by broadening its scope and engaging it with the theoretical outline of cultural production supplied in his book *The Political Unconscious* (1981).

Jameson's criticism, like Suvin's, displays a preference for the texts of the 1960s, although with some differentiations. What is startling, however, is that his engagement with Dick is limited almost exclusively to this decade. In his essay 'History and Salvation in Philip K. Dick', published for the first time in the second half of *Archaeologies of the Future*, he provides a condensed categorisation of Dick's oeuvre, breaking it down into three "cycles": "

> From 1955 to 1960 (some seven novels that we still have); the Science Fiction period, from 1961 to 1968 (I include ten novels, from *The Man in the High Castle* to *A Maze of Death*; we could argue about these and also set the dates a little earlier or later; and finally the religious novels, from 1973 to 1981 (some five works). (2005: 363)

These categories deliberately omit "the trash and hackwork" and "disconnect the religious thematics from the earlier works" (2005: 363). Yet this organisational model presents a blinkeredness that verges on the callous. The first cycle is particularly astounding, given that it ignores the entirety of Dick's sf output during the 1950s – no small feat given that it comprises eighty-three published short stories and six novels – while only one of the seven "mainstream" ("realist") novels was published during Dick's lifetime.[8] What Jameson neglects is any dialectical relationship between these two modes of production, whose coexistence indicates a struggle at both a representational and a material level. The third grouping, on the other hand, is so broad as to render it arbitrary. There certainly are increasing amounts of theological materials piling up in the later novels, but there can be little doubt that there are sizeable differences in how these are employed across the texts swept up into this category (for a clear picture of these differences see my analyses of *A Scanner Darkly* and *VALIS* in Chapter Two and Three respectively). While Jameson acknowledges in the briefest of terms that motifs persist and are re-codified between these groupings, there remains a distinctively mechanistic quality to the way that the first and third cycles are treated. Thus the diachronic movement of Dick's corpus, as Jameson portrays it, shows how the potential for the "psychological" aspects of the mainstream novels are properly realised in their transmutation into sf novels of the 1960s, which, having exhausted their potential by the end of the counterculture, invoke theology as a method of regeneration.

This is illuminated, although by no means satisfactorily, by Jameson's use of Dick within his framework of sf history. In the main body of *Archaeologies of the Future*, Jameson gives a chronological breakdown of sf history in the Global North, from the early "space opera" of Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs, to Thatcher-Reagan-era cyberpunk (2005: 93). While this schema suffers from a similar over-determinism to the one above, what is important to us here is that he situates Dick's 1960s novels in its centre, between the socio-political sf of Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth and the decentring of the subject in the British New Wave of Ballard and Moorcock. This

[8] The exception is *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, which was written in 1959 and published in 1975.

conveys a reductionism similar to that which Luckhurst identifies in Freedman and the postmodernist theorist Brian McHale: “a common ruptural history in which the New Wave is equated with Modernism so that the cyberpunk movement of the 1980s can be seen in conjunction with Postmodernism” (2005: 159). Dick, who was published in both British and American New Wave publications, is left frozen within the long 1960s, with little attention paid to the shifting historical territories of his work.

In the following chapters I examine Dick’s writing through the lens of genre. This may, I admit, sound odd, given that the majority of Dick’s writing is clearly located in the sf mode; however, my intention is to show how generic tendencies within sf are historicised, conveying what Jameson calls “the ideology of form” (1981: 62). In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson argues that the cultural landscape of the historical present is defined by clashing modes of cultural production. This means that while a certain mode will dominate at any given time, there is always overlap and conflict with others; Enlightenment thought, for example, is a dominant ideology that emerges at the end of the eighteenth century, but it provoked challenges from Romanticism and folk revival. There are, then, antagonisms between and, as I have shown in the examination of sf modes above, within modes of production. In Dick’s writing, this can be understood as historical-generic reflexivity, whereby anachronistic modes from outside sf, such as the Western or the hardboiled detective story, are introduced as a way of presenting creative contradictions within a work.

When Dick invokes Raymond Chandler in *Do Androids?* he creates a tension between his go-to historical referent of the 1950s and Chandler’s 1930s and 40s. The collision of pulp sf and hardboiled detection causes their genre materials to mix, mutate, and dislocate. Rather than a laconic gumshoe, Dick gives us Rick Deckard, an anxious and harassed white collar bounty hunter. Yet Deckard’s problems, rooted as they are in his material desires, are located in the anxieties that swirl around the Philip Marlowe of *The Long Goodbye*: obsolescence as a result of advances in capitalist production and consumption. But where Marlowe senses that his privileged position as a gumshoe-cum-knight errant is threatened by mechanical reproduction, Deckard’s delirious pursuit of an

authentic animal – the ultimate status symbol in his world, synonymous with luxury commodities of the 1950s – puts him in an existential spin. The post-war boom-times of advertising and commodity fetishism have not just displaced the detective as means of mapping the city, they have created consumer environments that have begun to alter the nature of what it means to be human and how reality is constituted. Therefore, through this dialogical relationship between genres, both of which invoke their own anachronisms, the text opens onto a very real and contemporaneous problem of capitalist society in the 1960s.

Genre, as I have outlined above, presents us with an inherently ideological structure for organising information. Moreover, it is one that is enmeshed with its productive base to the extent that it becomes difficult to separate the two. Amazon, for example, is the largest bookseller in the world; its website is a digital environment in which books and all consumer goods imaginable are categorised and organised, as in a "real-life" shop; its digital infrastructure is maintained by a human labour force, as are its distribution centres and delivery services; and for all the revenue it generates through sales, this profit is recorded and stored digitally in data centres that require enormous amounts of natural resources to run. At the same time, many of the books Amazon sells, like those of Dick, contain social critiques that are in direct opposition to the capitalist organisation of production and its constituent ideologies. These contradictions are nothing new to capital, but they are intensifying all the time. As a writer, genre means making certain aesthetic and thematic choices, as well as material and economic ones – in what format and by whom will your work be published? As a book seller, genre means which books go where and on which shelves. As a publisher, genre is weighed against consumer habits, demographics, and market forecasts. Genre organises cultural production, distribution, and consumption, whose apparatuses are inseparable from the ideological positions they embrace. Thus, in a society in which the hegemony proclaims that we are post-ideology and post-history, we can extend Althusser's claim that ideology is "eternal" (2001: 109) to include genre as a social constant: as long as there is culture there will be genre.

With this in mind, the key question I pose in relation to Dick is what do his intuitive engagements with genre tell us about genre at the global level outlined above? But answering this overarching question involves posing numerous others at a micro level. Why do we see clear invocations of other generic modes within his already reflexive and referential take on sf? What is the relationship between the Wild West and a decrepit Martian settlement? Why does Dick reanimate Philip Marlowe as a middle-class bounty hunter stalking androids in a radioactive metropolis? Why does it take him another decade to bring back the detective figure, only for him to return as a burnt-out husk? And why do traumatic memories of the 1960s become the basis for science-fictional wanderings in theology? These are the subjects of the chapters that follow.

In Chapter One, I investigate Dick's engagement with the American West. Here I examine a cluster of texts that span from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, which include sf short stories ('Foster, You're Dead' and 'Pay for the Printer'), mainstream novels (*Confessions of a Crap Artist* [1975 (1959)] and *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland* [1986 (1960)]), and sf novels (*Time Out* and *Martian Time-Slip* [1964 (1962)]). What I argue here is that Dick invokes themes and motifs that engage with the political myths of the Old West. In doing so, Dick constructs worlds that are both overtly "generic" and ideology. In this strange mixing of genre materials we see how capitalist ideology constructs realities which rather than "new" appear to us as slippages in time,

Chapter Two compares and contrasts two cases of science-fictional detection, in the novels *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *A Scanner Darkly*. My analysis considers the two stories as depictions of political-economic continuities and ruptures that occur between Keynesianism and neoliberalism, between the countercultural 1960s and the post-Watergate late-70s, using development and crises within capital as a means of confronting the socio-political dynamics of detection and conspiracy.

My final chapter considers what is still Dick's most divisive and intriguing text: *VALIS*. Exemplary of an increasing interest in theology and spiritualism in his later work, this novel is a fascinating science-fictional engagement with Dick's own life. Moreover, it returns to the scene of

the 1960s, probing its legacy through a vertiginous dialecticism in the hope that new ways of seeing might be produced. Here I consider how Dick confronts the genre of autobiography, overloading and rupturing its structures through the uncertainty of memory, as a means of creating a new political understanding of what it means to recall the past and to invoke new futures through these un-forgotten histories.

Finally, before starting on the analytical meat of this thesis, I need to make one further clarification. While I have raised concerns about the narrowness and rigidity of certain ways of organising Dick's work, I do not mean that any engagement with him must perform the impractical task of addressing all of his mammoth body of work. However, what I do believe, and what I aim to convey over the proceeding pages, is that we can get a firm grasp on Dick's critical method, which in turn enables us to address continuities and discontinuities across his oeuvre. This method constitutes a historically-engaged social critique produced through the structure of genre, which enables us to see the ways in which ideology is constructed at a cultural level, and, in turn, presents us with an interpretative framework that can both navigate and propose partial solutions to the menace of capitalist society.

Chapter 1: Philip K. Dick and the American West

This chapter examines Dick's engagement with the American West in his sf and mainstream novels from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s. As I stated in the previous chapter, Dick's fiction conveys a particularly Jamesonian structure of genre, whereby anachronistic modes of production form dialogical relations with the dominant mode of production in the historical present. The purpose of this chapter is to get to grips with how Dick incorporates the West into his fiction in order to work through representational dilemmas posed by social and cultural contradictions that arise between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s. This requires me to do two things. The first is to identify the tensions and connections between Dick's sf and mainstream work during the 1950s. The second is to explain how this struggle for a new mode of representation through these divergent modes of production is realised in the early 1960s in the spectacular off-world Western *Martian Time-Slip* (1964 [1962]).

Notably, this means traversing two decades and two stereotypically opposed social, economic, and cultural climates. However, while there are clearly differences in these areas before and after 1960, it is my belief that their discontinuities help to enrich the continuities. To borrow an excellent example of Jameson's, consider the fact that McCarthyism scores a major victory over organised labour in 1955, in the merging of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Although by the mid-1950s the latter was long past its 1930s heyday of Communist membership, it was still politically more progressive than the reactionary AFL. The merger effectively purged the labour movement of all remaining Communists and shut out black, female, and other minority workers. However, as Jameson points out, this crisis was both a defeat for the traditional left and "a fundamental 'condition of possibility' for the unleashing of the new social and political dynamics of the 60s" (1984: 181). In other words, this act of state repression has its adverse effects, forcing the hand of those excluded from traditional left-wing institutions into new organisations, alliances, and methods of protest and critique. One result is that cultural criticism and

political theory in general begins to flourish in this more heterodox environment, having been stultified in the 1940s. It is from within this climate that sections of American sf flourishes as a highly adept form of social criticism throughout the 1950s (Luckhurst, 2005: 109-119).

Throughout the 1950s, Dick's writing reflects the highpoints of sf as a critique of McCarthyism and Golden Age sf, while seeking out new forms of representation able to respond to turbulent social and cultural changes taking place in the mid-1950s. Sutin provides us with a useful sketch of Dick's output during this period: "from 1951 through 1958, [Dick wrote] eighty-odd stories and thirteen novels – six SF, seven mainstream. The six SF novels were all promptly published, but the seven mainstream novels languished" (2005: 123). Dick's sf short stories reach a crescendo in the middle of the decade (two of his finest, 'Foster, You're Dead' and 'Pay for the Printer' are discussed below), at which point he put aside sf in order to concentrate on writing mainstream novels. Indeed, even as Dick began selling his sf to magazines in the early 1950s, he yearned to make it as a mainstream writer. His reasons, Sutin observes, were not snobbish – from an early age he was "suspicious of cultural pretentions" (2005: 74) – yet he certainly preferred the company of Berkley's literati, as opposed to the emerging sf fandom (2005: 87). Unsurprisingly, for someone as steadfastly determined as Dick, he was producing large quantities of mainstream writing in the late 1940s, while working on sf and f stories (some of which would make it into print in revised forms some years later): "his primary efforts were devoted to mainstream stories. Phil wrote dozens of these during this period, all now lost. All that is certain is that their repeated rejection by editors was a heartbreak to Phil, who yearned for mainstream status – then and always" (Sutin, 2005: 93).

By 1954, the sf publishing industry began to shift from magazines to paperback novels, and Dick refocused his energies from writing sf short stories to writing novels in the sf, f, and mainstream form. Yet what he really longed for was mainstream recognition. This ambition reached a highpoint in the latter part of the 1950s when he made the decision to take a hiatus from sf in order to focus on writing mainstream novels. In terms of breaking out of sf's "ghetto" and into the literary sphere, these efforts were unsuccessful. Aside from *Confessions of a Crap Artist* – which eventually saw

publication in the early 1970s – none of the mainstream novels were published during Dick's lifetime. Yet this period of flip-flopping between writing sf and mainstream stories is important for understanding Dick as a writer. What he recognised through producing his sf and mainstream work in this early period was that both modes, as they stood, lacked the representational ability to confront the social and cultural developments taking place in the 1950s. Thus what can be misinterpreted as conflicting aspects of Dick's work during this period need instead to be understood as his emerging comprehension that changes in society, politics, and culture demanded a new form of representation: sf and realism could no longer be held at arm's length but must be allowed to collapse into one another.

What is notable about the mainstream novels is that they train Dick's sights on the Californian landscape. While this is a rather mundane observation, it is, I believe, highly important to the way in which he formulates his social critique. It is here, then, that I must give some further details as to how I understand the role of the Western in Dick's writing. It is clear in these texts that we are not dealing with tales of lone gunmen, train robberies, or blistering rides across the Badlands. There is certainly death, in some cases murder, there is extortion, and there are fascinating depictions of travel within and between urban, rural, and suburban areas. But when I talk about these texts incorporating aspects of the Western, I am inferring two key aspects that reach beyond the tropes of the genre. First, the Western is used here to imply the history of a geographical region. Dick's writing engages with a particularly Californian history and geography, where the presence of dairy farms, orange groves, and irrigation ditches appear at first incidental, but begin to tilt perspectives and manipulate events. In many respects, what is strange or *estranging* about these mundane geographical signifiers is that they are enveloped into a suburbanised reality.

Dick breaks down the distance between rural and urban life, folding it into the suburb. This presents an interesting paradox, as the suburban settings of his texts are mediated by reified class perspectives. Yet within these restricted realities there are artefacts and clues that open up expansive historical perspectives. For example, in *Martian Time-Slip*, human life on Mars is supported

by a system of canals. This detail invokes two things simultaneously: the first is the late-nineteenth century theory that Mars was in fact covered in ancient waterways; the second is that irrigation is one of the most important factors in California's socio-economic history. Here scientific speculation (which borders on the science-fictional) opens onto the economic history of Californian society, infrastructure, and capital. At the same time, however, it is history that is available only through disproven scientific theories and intangible networks of social and economic relations, as it is here, cannot help but feel insubstantial. In this respect, our sense of history is made to feel like a televisual spectacle or a cheap commodity. It is the image on the screen and yet it is not, it is what it says on the can and yet it is not; it is metonymic, mystified, and ideological; it can never be called forth as a reality in and of itself.

This brings me to the second distinctively Western aspect of these texts: the frontier. The frontier is without a doubt an idea weighed down by its own problematic history. Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis, delivered in 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' in 1893, pronounced that the frontier had closed in 1890. Moreover, it established a skewed perspective on what the West was regionally and productively, while reducing its history to the story of white males. Yet the influence of his writing is remarkable, despite the raft of criticism it has received. Patricia Limerick compares the Frontier Thesis to a classic car, something which is appreciated as an artefact rather than scrutinised for its usefulness (1995: 697). Moreover, in the same essay, she instructively delineates his work as an attempt to exert order over the past:

> He wanted to persuade the disorderly events and people of history to submit to some kind of order. The agents and devices he used to produce that order were those reified and nearly animate concepts he stayed loyal to all his life: the conditions, forces, ideals, institutions, traits, types, elements, and processes that could translate the chaos of history into patterns of clarity and manageability. (1995: 710)

In Limerick's eyes, the Frontier Thesis is an attempt to deal with the messiness of Western history by imposing false limits. Yet these ideological obfuscations are, I believe, inherently useful in understanding how mystification functions.

There is no room here to embark on a lengthy analysis of Western historicism, but it is necessary to elucidate the frontier's pertinence to my analysis in this chapter. Limerick and the New Western Historians are right to criticise the impact of Turner's work, whose legacy has cast a long shadow over perceptions of the West. What I argue here, however, is that Dick's writing employs the frontier as a process precisely because it provides a means of engaging with limitations pertaining to history and genre, problematizing the cultural boundaries these frameworks invoke by playing on the contradictions between "subjective" and "objective" perspectives. Kevin Millard argues that a fundamental problem with the critical approach of the New Western Historians is that cultural production is positioned as an obstacle to a fundamental Western truth: "Fiction, they argued, only contributed to the perpetuation of myth that occluded a true sense of how the West really was" (Millard, 2011: 464). Like Millard, the Western historian Richard Slotkin supports the notion that fiction is essential for enabling our understanding of history as something that is constructed through narrative: "History is what it is, but it is also what we make of it. What we call 'history' is not a thing, an object of study, but a story we choose to tell about things" (2005: 222). Therefore, what the New Western Historians denounce as mythologizing is, for Slotkin, the ethical milieu into which every historian must venture. To engage with history means having to navigate innumerable heterogeneous narratives represented through different forms and media, be they spoken, written, or visual, whether they come to us as songs, newspaper articles, or films. Thus we must confront the essential paradox of history, whose existence is understood primarily through various forms of cultural representation and yet is clearly something that is not simply "textual" but has a material basis.

The internal contradictions of history that we see in Slotkin echo Jameson's important theoretical observation at the beginning of *The Political Unconscious*: "history is *not* a text, not a

narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious" (1981: 21; emphasis in original). For Jameson, history is a structural totality that shapes our material experience of the world around us (hence the exclamation on which *The Political Unconscious* opens: "Always historicize!" [1981: ix]). Like Slotkin, Jameson's formulation highlights an essential contradiction at the heart of our relation to history: firstly, history is something that really happens – it is not reducible to a purely textual status (as it is in post-structuralism) – but it is always mediated by texts; secondly, historicising is a political act that takes place at the level of ideology. Here Jameson draws on Athusser's concept of "structural causality" and Lacan's concept of the "real". Structural causality, Althusser posits, is unique to Marxist theory, differing from "linear" or "expressive/teleological" causalities. Linear causality "describes the effects of one element on another," while expressive/teleological causality "can describe the effect of the whole on the parts, but only by making the latter an 'expression' of the former, a phenomenon of its essence" (Brewster in Althusser, 2015: 532-533). *Structural* causality, on the other hand, is defined as follows: "The cause of the effects is the complex organization of the whole, *present-absent* in its economic, political, ideological and knowledge effects" (2015: 533; emphasis in original). It is this "present-absent" formulation that Jameson expresses as history's "absent cause"; in other words, history, for Jameson, just like reality for Althusser, is not an abstract phenomenon but a structure that is only perceivable via the relations between social, economic, cultural, and political levels.

The Lacanian "real" bears similar characteristics to Althusser's present-absent formulation. While Lacan adapted his conceptualisation of the real over the course of his theorising, it is most commonly referred to in terms of its later configuration as a fundamental lack: "the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped" (Sheridan in Lacan, 1977: x). It is in this sense of an unapproachable, unrepresentable presence that Jameson frames his understanding of history. For Lacan, the real can only be understood in relation

to his two other major theoretical categories: the symbolic and the imaginary. In the same sense, the historical, for Jameson, can only be broached by way of existing cultural production. Both Lacan's real and Jameson's history are thus posited as fundamental impossibilities governing our lives.

Dick provides us with an excellent example of Jameson's Althusserian-Lacanian conceptualisation of history in *High Castle*, which can be extrapolated to depict how the frontier functions at a structural level in Dick's work. In the novel, the Japanese-occupied territories on the west coast of United States, the Japanese bourgeoisie have an insatiable appetite for American "antiquities". The sheer scale of demand for the finite relics of American history facilitates a huge blackmarket economy dedicated to producing and selling forgeries. In fact, the market is so flooded with counterfeits that it would collapse if its shady business practices were subjected to any proper scrutiny.

Towards the beginning of the novel, Wyndam-Matson, one of San Francisco's wealthy industrialists and black marketeers, contemplates the notion of authenticity. He owns two Zippo lighters, one of which, he claims, was found in the pocket of Franklin D. Roosevelt when he died (in the world of the novel he has been assassinated), the other is a seamless fake. Presenting them to his mistress, he asks her if she can tell the difference: "'One has historicity, a hell of a lot of it. As much as any object ever had. And one has nothing. Can you feel it? […] You can't. You can't tell which is which. There's no 'mystical plasmic presence', no 'aura' around it'" (Dick, 1962: 66). The authenticity of the object cannot be ascertained simply by looking, it can only be confirmed by an external referent: in this case, a document of authenticity. What Wyndam-Matson identifies here echoes Jameson's notion that we can only confront history through textual mediation, while simultaneously invoking Walter Benjamin's "aura" and Jean Baudrillard's "Orders of Simulacra".

For Benjamin, the entire concept of history is disrupted by the emergence of mechanical reproduction at the beginning of the twentieth century. Using visual art as a lens through which to view history, Benjamin argues that mechanical reproduction techniques erode prior notions of authenticity in western-European culture: "The authenticity of a thing," Benjamin writes, "is the

essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced" (1999: 215). Thus the aura of an object is, for Benjamin, hierarchical, reinforced by ritualistic cultural practices that imbue mystification. Mechanical reproduction, on the other hand, "emancipates" (1999: 218) the object from the hold of ritual and mystification – aura and ritual are eroded by the repetition of the production line. Yet while the shift is a radical one, the emancipation that mechanical reproduction presents in capitalist society is one of disorientation and new means of control: the old hierarchies of knowledge, taste, and access to art are irreversibly altered by a constant outpouring of reproducible commodities, which, in turn, efface any notion of "objective" history.

Benjamin's ideas are pushed to their extreme in the work of Baudrillard, who argues that in in late-capitalist society it is not simply material objects that are reproduced – unsettling the traditional order applied to artistic production – but reality itself:

> When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience, a resurrection of the figurative where the object and the substance have disappeared. And there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production. (1981: 13)

These are the conditions of what Baudrillard famously calls "simulation" – the endlessly referential, inauthentic, "hyperreal" (1981: 13) – which is the antithesis of Benjamin's aura. To explain what is for Baudrillard a new stage of capitalism, driven by advertisement, marketing, and the image, Baudrillard provides an incredibly condensed history of reproduction:

> – *Counterfeit* is the dominant scheme of the 'classical' period, from the Renaissance to the industrial revolution;
>
> – *Production* is the dominant scheme of the industrial era;
>
> – *Simulation* is the reigning scheme of the current phase that is controlled by the code.
>
> The first order of simulacrum is based on the natural law of value, that of the second order on the commercial law of value, that of the third order on the structural law of value. (1983: 83)

Life in the third order of simulacrum is dominated by what Baudrillard calls the "code". The latter, as its name suggests, is akin to DNA code: an irrefutable *structure* underpinning the real. In short, the unsettling vision that Baudrillard presents, building directly on Benjamin's work, conveys reproduction as the historical foundation of the late-capitalist real: "The very definition of the real becomes: *that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction*" (1983: 146; emphasis in original). It is at the outer limits of this formulation that Baudrillard detects the reproductive structure of simulation, where "the real is not only what can be reproduced, but *that which is always already reproduced*" (1983: 146; emphasis in original). The real that we encounter in simulation is the hyperreal. Moving beyond the deluge of mass-produced commodities, we are made to confront the late-capitalist real as a kind of "zone," consisting only of its own reproducibility.

The speculative history that Dick presents in *High Castle* embeds the reproducible nature of the novel-as-commodity within the paradox of history itself. What we are shown in *High Castle* is history as *re*-production, with the forger and the (science) fiction writer depicted as providing greater insight into the way in which reality is constituted. Thus, by disturbing the boundary between "real" and "fake," *High Castle* reconfigures the division between these epistemological categories as a Moebius strip. It is in this disruption of binaries that we can begin to understand Dick's comprehension of the frontier: the reproduction of a white American myth – frontier as Turnerian

relic – is inextricably linked to the material developments by which history is measured. In other words, Dick conveys the frontier as inherently "mythological," but, unlike Limerick and the New Western Historians, perceives this as a seam exposing the ideological structure of history.

Having an outline of the various theoretical ideas surrounding history and reproduction in Marxism and so-called "post-Marxism" is important for understanding the tensions in Dick's writing during the late 1950s and the early 1960s, evinced particularly in the mainstream novels. In the latter, there is a distinctive sense that material and cultural changes in the historical present demand new forms of representation. The realist mode that Dick invokes is in some respects a useful way of depicting petite bourgeois and white-collar anxieties regarding work, masculinity, and cultural identity in Eisenhower's America. At the same time, though, their biggest strength is also their weakness: pushing reification to its limits, depicting solipsistic and paranoid realities as becoming ever more detached and ever more ossified. Thus the sensation of exhaustion that these texts produce – the heart attack is a running motif – conveys a latent sense of frustration. As depicted above, contradictions in McCarthyist society create a sense of movement as stasis. Rather than being resolved in the Kennedy era, this expansion-contraction dialectic becomes intensified by the paradoxes presented by economic and cultural liberalism, war in Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement, all of which are mediated by the image and the spectacle of visual media. Harnessing the frontier as an ideological structure enables Dick to comprehend this constant barrage of contradictions as opening up new potentialities for representation, new modes of expression, while simultaneously understanding that they create new forms of repression.

In this chapter I examine a cluster of short stories and novels produced between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s. I begin by looking at the way in which historical time is depicted in relation to consumerism and the military-industrial complex in two of Dick's best short stories from the mid-1950s: 'Foster, You're Dead' and 'Pay for the Printer' (referred to as "'Foster'" and "'Printer'" respectively from here on). I then go on to juxtapose this against depictions of travel in the mainstream novels *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland* and *Confessions of a Crap Artist*. The main purpose of

this first section is to gain a keener understanding of how the frontier acts as a paradoxical opening and closing of space, a limit but also a catalyst for expressive and interpretative potential. This I view as a dialectic between Dick's sf and mainstream writing up until the end of the decade, both of which offer something the other cannot. The mainstream novels in particular present a sense of exhaustion that can also be read as expressive frustration, a desire to break from generic limitations.

The second part of the chapter focuses on *Martian Time-Slip*. What I argue here is that this novel constitutes Dick's most accomplished treatment of the frontier and the West. Importantly, it does this as a sf text, turning Mars into a retro-future, which is equal parts agrarian economy, psychiatric ward, and suburban neighbourhood. My analysis here looks at the effects that the Western anachronism has in the context of sf. On the one hand, the suburban-rural setting enables Dick to engage in a social critique through a composite history of California. On the other hand, this invocation of agrarianism in the sf framework helps us to rethink the role of sf as engaging with the networks of capital that link rural and urban societies.

Expansion, Contraction

In Dick's short story from the mid-1950s 'Foster', the eponymous Mike Foster is ostracised from his classmates at school and on his lonely walks home ogles the merchandise in the showrooms of General Electric. The consumer product that he longs for, which will set everything right, is a bomb shelter. But his father, the town's only "anti-P" (anti-Preparedness), will not buy one. His reasons are twofold. The first, quite simply, is that he cannot afford to; Bob Foster is a small businessman who owns a wooden furniture store, and furniture, in a world of Cold War hysteria, is not what people are buying. His second reason is that he suspects that this might all be a scam: "'They're scaring us to keep the wheels going […] They don't want another depression'" (1999 [1955]: 227). Finally, though, for the sake of his son, he caves and takes the latest top-of-the-line bunker on a payment plan. No

sooner has he done this, with his bunker-envious neighbours' words still hanging in the air, his new purchase is made obsolete by the announcement of a new Soviet Weapon that can burrow through the surface and through the walls of the bunkers. Fortunately, though, a new accessory is developed that can stop it; it will be on the shelves just in time for Christmas. But with the shop failing and the bills eating up their meagre earnings, the Fosters cannot afford any more outlay; they cannot, in fact, afford to keep the bunker. Returning home from school one afternoon, Foster finds a gaping maw of earth in the back garden where his cherished bunker once was.

As far as Christmas stories go, it is a chilling one. Moreover, it is one of Dick's finest examples of the sinister symbiosis of Cold War paranoia and post-war consumerism. Dick saw the two converging on the same site: obsolescence. In the case of the Bomb, this meant human extinction; while for the aspirational consumer, it signified the power of advertising to instil the idiom "newer is better". In 'Printer', a story published the following year, Dick adjusts his perspective to imagine a society that needs rebuilding after a nuclear war. Except it is *building* that is precisely the problem. In this story humanity's survival has been placed in the hands of the "Biltongs": benevolent extra-terrestrials attracted to Earth by the sight of the nuclear blasts. Significantly, the Biltongs can reproduce ("print") the objects familiar to human society, and so, from near extinction, civilization is preserved. Except the Biltongs are not suited to Earth's climate, nor do they enjoy living alone in the disparate human settlements, or being mercilessly overworked. Unable to sustain the incessant demand of the settlers' need for material goods, their reproductions become ever more degraded, as they, too, become exhausted and die.

The humans in 'Printer' are so dependent on buying what they need, they can no longer conceive of the notion of building. The ray of hope comes in the mysterious figure of John Dawes, who, it is revealed, belongs to a settler group who have begun to make things for themselves and grow their own meagre crops in the ash-covered soil. As the character of Dawes shows, as does Bob Foster's furniture shop, despite their brilliance, both stories are tinged with a nostalgia for a past where people made things, knew how to repair them, and could live off the land. Although, it must

be said, the visions of these alternate worlds are so bleak that their nostalgia element is pushed towards the margins of fantasy.

These stories provide great insight into the social critique that left-wing sf adopted in the first part of the decade, while providing clues as to why Dick's mainstream writing becomes an important counterpart to his sf. In both 'Foster' and 'Printer', military-industrialism and commodity fetishism converge and combine with anti-communist paranoia and consumerism. This reflects a general condition within sf at the beginning of the 1950s, where some of its left-leaning contingent use the genre as a way of scrutinising the intricate matrices underpinning capital. Thus it is possible to see in these short stories what Keith Booker perceives in Frederick Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth's standout text of this socio-political turn, *The Space Merchants* (1952): "[a] profound understanding of the direction in which consumer capitalism was already headed […] [suggesting] interesting forms of complicity between the corporate manipulation of consumers for profit and the official promotion of anticommunism hysteria in the Cold War" (2001: 40). In the stories above, Dick uses these entanglements of the political and the commercial to instil an increasing sense of the present as dissolving, literally in the case of 'Printer', under its own productive, consumptive, and ideological weight. At the same time, the past has become a degraded reproduction – in 'Foster', the more the Biltongs print, the poorer their reproductions become, while the future takes up a handful of grim positions: financial ruin; global annihilation; nostalgia for a past that never was; and a year-zero rebuilding of society from the bottom up.

We can begin to see, then, that Dick's writing plays on inherent contradictions at work within the economic and ideological structures of post-war American society. The nostalgic image of the 1950s, where, as Luckhurst puts it, "The tail-fin embodies optimistic swagger, the extravagant gesture of speed and modernity shared by the citizens of a global superpower in the symbol of American freedom" (2005: 109) is turned into a degraded image of itself. But changes to the organisation of physical space through infrastructure and industry are important to Dick's writing, especially by the end of the 1950s. The claustrophobic car journey at the beginning of 'Printer',

where the cloned Buick crawls through the wastes of civilization, is a stark contrast to the more expansive depictions of car travel that we get in the mainstream novels. Yet the latter are no less disturbing, nor are they in anyway endorsements of a nostalgia for a sense of lost freedom, despite Dick's admiration for *On the Road* (1957) (Sutin, 2005: 146). Therefore, if the sf short stories find encounter a limitation in their very expression of how history is eroded by consumerism and military-industrialism, then in the later mainstream texts attempt to regain a sense of the historical. This, I argue, is not depicted as a return to a "realistic" depiction of history, but attempts to use the mainstream mode of depicting a particularly reified account of the historical. Therefore, if 'Printer' exemplifies an early engagement with the entropic effects of post-war capitalism, then the two mainstream novels dealt with here examine history as mystification.

The depiction of travel in a mainstream work that I want to examine first is from *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland* (1986 [1960]) – a partial rewrite of a lost manuscript from the mid-1950s. Jim Fergesson is a retired mechanic, garage owner, and a through-and-through Republican. Looking to sell his business, he is approached by Chris Harman, a young new breed of capitalist, who has money in real estate and the record industry. Harman convinces Fergesson to invest in what he describes as "The garage of tomorrow" (Dick, 1986: 54): an automobile centre which is to be part of a larger suburban retail development outside San Francisco.

In a fascinating sequence, we see Fergesson set out optimistically to view the proposed development site, only to get horribly disorientated by the road systems and the array of public and private works taking place in and around the city's outskirts. Tuning in to a radio programme on the Sons of the Pioneers, he is soon unnerved by the size of the freeway and the cacophony of horns that signal him as he tries to take his exit. He navigates a rundown strip, observing on his way "an ominous black-iron overpass" (1986: 59) that seems almost too tight to pass under, only to be spat back out onto the freeway and across the Richmond Bridge. Slightly shaken, Fergesson is heartened when he catches site of building works. On closer inspection, though, the site fills him with dread – "What power to remove! Nothing could stand" (1986: 61). Before he can regain his composure, he is

harangued by a city official and forced to leave the site. Eventually he finds the plot he is looking for and is shown around the muddy, unfinished housing tract, while his guide chatters on about sf novels. The passage is drawn to an end when, climbing a dirt hill, Fergesson suffers a minor heart-attack.

This passage is a reflection on the trauma of technological modernity and corporate collectivism eroding the ground beneath the small businessmen. In 1956, Dwight D. Eisenhower pushed through the Federal-Aid Highway Act and the Highway Revenue Act, which put in motion the "most wide-ranging, landscape-altering public works project in U.S. history" (Wells, 2012: 79). Yet in this huge act of expansion, Dick finds bewilderment and effacement. This is not nostalgia for the type of small entrepreneurial businessman that Fergesson represents; as Charles Thorpe observes, "Not only does Dick present sharp portraits of the meanness and narrow egotism of petit-bourgeois life, he also suggests that the forces feared by the little-man – big capital, the proletariat, and the feminine – are in many ways attractive to them" (2011: 415). Instead, what is presented to us again are contradictory forces of expansion and contraction. These are conveyed spatially as the reshaping of the Californian landscape, but their effects are felt temporally, as the disorientation and cultural alienation that Fergesson experiences. The sensation that this conveys is that as these expansive forces of capital begin to reshape the environment, petite-bourgeois time starts to waver.

The strange effects that *Humpty Dumpty* generates can be explained by its emphasis on work over consumption, where changes in the landscape reflect a changing labour force. Dick described *Humpty Dumpty* as "a novel about the proletarian world from the inside" (Sutin, 2005: 429); however, Thorpe notes that "The main characters are not wage slaves but 'self-reliant' entrepreneurs" (Thorpe: 415 n.11). Michael Hoberek elucidates this point, stating that what we see here is Dick's sensitivity to the changes within the American working class, where post-war de-industrialisation increasingly proletarianizes white collar work, which "is no longer involved in industrial production but is still required to sell its (mental) labor; that is disengaged (even at the middle-management level) from meaningful decision-making within corporate bureaucracies; and

that is subject to de-skilling and downsizing without the protection of unions" (1997: 376). This, as Hoberek observes, relates directly to the restructuring of the labour force during this period: "White-collar workers had, by 1956, surpassed blue-collar workers to become the largest segment of the U.S. workforce" (1997: 376). Notably, the work of the sf writer fell in to this bracket, albeit, as Hoberek notes, with the wiggle room of being a freelancer. Therefore, it is helpful for us to understand here that Dick is not simply trying to delineate the new terms of class struggle, but is also trying to find a new voice for it.

Fergesson's drive presents a geographical unevenness. This is not so much fragmentation, as it is a fusing and compounding of heterogeneous materials. The literally emerging suburb in *Humpty Dumpty* is a crucible, in which both urban and rural capital is compounded and reified, but never escaped. In this respect, we should take note of the fact that the narration is meticulous in its mapping of Fergesson's route, and yet it does not help us or Fergesson feel any more reassured about where we are or what we are seeing. Traversing newly developing territories from an already uncertain social position allows us to see how the land is marked by capital, but it simultaneously reproduces a perspective which, like the doom story, has its limitations. In the uncanny buffer zone of the suburb, strange new metonymies and supplements for capitalist relations come into being, for which new ways of seeing are required (perhaps those sf books that the site manager babbles on to Fergesson about hold some kind of answer).

A car journey plays a vital role in another of Dick's mainstream novels, *Confessions of a Crap Artist* (1975 [1959]; referred to as "*Crap Artist*" from here on). In *Humpty Dumpty*, automotive transport and infrastructure leads to dead ends and inaccessible worlds: the housing plot where Fergesson suffers his heart attack is like an alien desert; towards the end of the novel, one character takes stock of a Nevada diner, remarking: "'We could be almost anywhere in California'" (Dick, 1986: 179). A perennial feature of Dick's fiction is the depiction of reality as an infinite regress; California, in this respect, is a territory into which the geographies, materials, and peoples beyond its borders collapse. *Crap Artist* probes these anxieties, but here travel is combined with narrative polyphony,

creating fragmented geographies by blurring the physical terrain of the town and the country with its multiple solipsistic viewpoints.

Jack Isidore lives in Seville, California. He is an obsessive autodidact who continuously muddles science "fact" with "fiction" from popular science and sf magazines. Notably, he is also a war veteran – or so he claims – which offers a possible explanation for his off-kilter worldview as a product of trauma. The novel proper begins when Jack's sister and brother-in-law, Fay and Charley Hume, arrive at Jack's apartment to take him to their property in Marin County. Jack has been caught shoplifting chocolate ants and, rather begrudgingly, Fay and Charley decide it would benefit him to stay with them. Charley, in particular, thinks that the country will have restorative powers, "'He ought to be up in the country," Charley said. "In the healthy air. Where he could be with animals'" (Dick, 1975: 39). These scenes are narrated by Fay, but, importantly, backtrack over certain details that Jack has already told us, giving the text a sedimentary structure, while instilling a paradoxical effect of these interlinking and overlapping narrative voices being isolated from each other.

The journey that ensues is painted by Fay as a form of transcendental escape, lifting Jack from small-town squalor to the sanctity of the Marin County countryside. At the Golden Gate Bridge, Fay admires the scenery, while casting scorn on her two male travellers: "neither of them paid attention to the incredible view of the City and the Bay and the Marin hills; both of them had no capacity to enjoy anything esthetically" (1975: 43). The emphasis on what is seen here and who sees it is important. Fay is portrayed as both intelligent and perceptive, but this is repeatedly offset by her reification of her surroundings and social position. This particular way of seeing is best understood as a closed loop perpetuated through her bourgeois aspirations and her subversion of prescribed gender roles. If we think again of Jack, it is quite clear that his passive nature means that a change of scenery will alter little about him – he only admits he must make changes in his life at the end of the novel when he departs the Hume house. Thus the emancipating act folds back on Fay herself: moving Jack to the country gives her an outlet from the existential cul-de-sac she finds herself in.

Fay is an emotionally strong and well-educated woman, who is, simultaneously manipulative and selfish. She invariably gets what she wants, but, at the same time, what she wants is less emancipatory than it is a negative expression of 1950s gender roles. Therefore, while she bucks a number of gender stereotypes – shucking housework and motherhood, swearing, and seeking out intellectual company – her potentially subversive actions are always collapsing into a coldness of personality – she has married Charley for his money, she compares young children to animals, she is emotionally cruel to both Charley and Jack. Indeed, Palmer claims that the success of the book is the depiction of Fay as "trapped and inconsistent, yet as powerful and effective" (2003: 77). These fascinating, often frightening, contradictions are generated by her own detachment from work. Thus her relation to the house, quite clearly hers, despite it being Charley's money that pays for it, is simultaneously abstracted and alienated. This is conveyed in its physical presentation, which Jack describes as a "swanky modern San Francisco type of house" (Dick, 1975: 17) built on cow pasture. Its anachronistic architecture and the sheer impracticality of its mod-cons means that it functions poorly as a home: their electronic utilities will not function during long power outages; and they have three separate heating systems, but still cannot keep the house warm. Therefore, for all her assertiveness over her environment, Fay finds her efforts keep her perpetually jogging on the spot.

When Charley has a heart attack (which she is suspected of provoking), she begins an affair with Nat Anteil, a well-educated and more submissive character than Charley. Shortly after his discharge from hospital, Charley kills all the family's animals and then himself, although his real target is Fay. But this new situation, which is manufactured, at least in part, by Fay, ultimately changes very little: she gains control of the house, having eventually driven Jack out, convincing him to cash in the stake left to him in Charley's will. But at the same time, Nat does not have the financial clout that Charley did. Her efforts seem only to have exhausted one set of restrictive relations and replaced them with another.

In a monologue towards the beginning of the novel, Fay sets about defining the countryside: a rugged, often violent, way of life, where gofers are poisoned and goats are eaten – although this is

observed from the comfort of her glass-fronted living room while listening to Bach. She signs off by stating: “This is the country. This isn’t the city” (1975: 43). Yet, of course, it is not, or, as Palmer observes, it is not for her: “the combination of affluence, monotony and female isolation is very suburban” (2003: 75). Her detachment from productive forces is both a condition of her class status, but also a condition of 1950s patriarchy. The interesting aspect of *Crap Artist* is that its multiple viewpoints consolidate its feeling of myopia. At the same time, the suburb is transplanted onto the nostalgic back-to-nature setting, blotting out the highly industrialised agricultural setting.

Crap Artist depicts an impasse for Dick’s mainstream writing. It takes the claustrophobia and isolation of middle-class life to a point that it cannot push beyond. Thus in traversing the outer limits of reification the text starts to oscillate: either it must collapse back into the misery of its closed-off perspectives or it must spill over into a mode of production with looser cognitive constraints. The social critique in the mainstream texts examined here is astute, and the way in which California’s geography is expressed through journeys that fold back on themselves and rural locales that reprogram the frontier as suburbia are crucial developments in Dick’s work. However, the irony of the mainstream novels is that they lack the flexibility to deal with some of the truly bizarre aspects of American society and culture that develop in post-war California. Moreover, their sense of physical and mental isolation leaves little basis to offer any partial solutions to the menace posed by the increasing integration of state and capital.

What I want to address now is the missing link or final piece of contextual detail that helps complete the picture of Dick’s frontier process and thus brings us closer to the science-fictionalised engagement with the West that we see in *Martian Time-Slip*. So far, I have shown how Dick engages with the trauma of large-scale infrastructural expansion and changes in the labour market. Alongside this, however, there is an equally sinister, although rather more cartoonish, development taking place in California during the 1950s. I am referring here to the Nazi rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, who literally appeared on U.S. television screens in 1955. So far, I have shown how consumerism and military-industrialism merge in Dick’s sf short stories to erode time and history. I

have also shown that in the mainstream novels California's physical geography is deployed to create a solipsistic form of reification. What I am proposing now is something like a merger of the two, whereby material fetishism and reification start to produce paranoid geographies. To elaborate, I am not suggesting that paranoia does not exist within the sf short stories or the mainstream novels. What I am proposing, though, is that the roadways and expansive vistas that ensnare characters in the mainstream novels are subjected to the kind of dissolving effects that commodity fetishism produces in the sf short stories. There is, though, a modification to be introduced here, which makes this more complex than a straightforward cutting and shutting of literary techniques. By the end of the 1950s, the dominance of mechanical reproduction starts losing ground to the reproduction of the image in televisual mass media. At this point cultural representation and mass media bring about a more acute sense of reality and history as a product of reproductive forces. What is until this point a frontier founded on contradictions between freedom of movement, work, consumption, race, gender, and class structure, is now complicated further by a culture industry geared towards simulation.

In a recent essay, Laurence Rickels provides us with a valuable assessment of the linkage between Dick's perpetual California and its incorporation of Nazi Germany: "Typically, Dick's future worlds, even when transposed to Mars, operate under the signifier appeal of 'California'. If there is a bicoastal dialectic whereby symptoms of Nazi German provenance wash up onto the Coast, then Dick brings it to its crisis point with the prospect of Germany's post-war integration into the West so close to home" (Rickels in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 83). On the one hand, this reinforces the sense that California is for Dick an endlessly re-workable space that sucks heterogeneous materials into its composite landscape. At the same time, it complicates the relationship between physical geographic spaces, cultural representation, and history. Indeed, as I examine in more detail below, one of striking effects produced in *Martian Time-Slip* is its laminated structure: generic tropes, geographic space, work-time, and histories are lain translucently across one another. It is an effect that is rooted

in the strange ability of California to envelop global spaces and systems, while retaining a sense of insularity.

Such paradoxical global and local spatialities are elucidated by California's historical openness to international capital and simultaneous dependence on government subsidies (Olin, 1991: 145). We can also point to examples like the discovery of oil in the Orange County in the early twentieth century, which instigated population dispersals of its urban centres, creating early instances of suburban communities (Viehe, 1991: 3). Rickels identifies a particular source for these contradictions in Dick's writing in the disconcerting emergence of Wernher von Braun as an influential figure in American culture. Von Braun is the most famous of the numerous scientists and technicians extracted from Nazi Germany at the end of the War under Project Overcast, a precursor to the larger extractive programme Project Paperclip. On arriving in the U.S. von Braun was integrated first into the military's ballistics program and later, after NASA's establishment in 1958, the space programme. Although based in Texas and then Alabama on his arrival to the U.S., von Braun established a California connection through his work for Disney, for whom he made his first television appearance in 1955. Prior to this, von Braun had tried his hand, unsuccessfully, at science fiction before converting his failed novel into a popular science book, *The Mars Project*, in 1952. As Rickels notes, "As soon as von Braun had arrived he recognized that in the United States a space program could be funded only upon becoming part of popular culture" (Rickels in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 88).

Yet as well as his desire to garner influence and funding through the culture industry, it is worth noting the nexus of diplomatic, militaristic, and capitalistic relations that lay behind his arrival in the U.S. John Gimbel explains that Project Paperclip was never a solely American venture, but a joint effort with the British, with whom scientists and technicians were shared. It was, however, an exclusive relationship that was simultaneously "an attempt to deny the benefits of German expertise to *all* nations *except* Great Britain" (Gimbel, 1990: 343; my emphasis). The identification, extraction, and processing of industrial and scientific information began towards the end of the War as a military

operation, but as more and more German assets fell into Allied hands, the sheer scale of the operation drew in recruits from universities and the private sector. At the same time, domestic pressure from U.S. industrialists cajoled the Truman government into allowing the unfettered plunder of German industrial research, materials, and expertise. Thus not only were a plethora of government agencies networked together with areas of private industry, but a wartime military operation was transformed into a "commercial-industrial exploitation program" (1990: 346). Germany and German industrial information and expertise became subject to a gold rush from American private interests, which were eventually halted when concerns were raised about this pillaging severely hampering German economic recovery.

Von Braun plays a highly important symbolic role in Dick's writing, demonstrating the terrible mixing of mass culture and state policy. Indeed, it is von Braun who inspires a notable shift in Germanic character types in Dick's work. Suvin picks out two notable early examples: Security Commissioner Reinhart in the 1953 novella 'The Variable Man' and Major Jules Streiter in *The Man Who Japed* (1956). The composition of the latter, Suvin notes, is particularly interesting: "it compounds allusions to the names and doctrines of Moral Rearmament's Buchman, Social Credit's Major Douglas, and the fanatic Nazi racist Julius Streicher" (Suvin in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al, 1992: 7). Yet these character types alter in the 1960s novels to mad scientist types: Dr Bruno Bluthgeld in *Dr Bloodmoney* (1965), Rudolph Balkani in *The Ganymede Takeover* (1967 [1964-1966]), Carlton Leufteufel in *Deus Irae* (1976 [1964-1975]), Dr von Einmem in *Lies Inc*. Notably, Bluthgeld, like Streicher, is another composite, this time of von Braun and H-Bomb father Howard Teller.

Suvin designates this presence of Germanic characters, hybridized by Dick's application of pulp pastiche, as part of an overarching "parabolic mirror" (1992: 15) reflecting wartime Germany onto the American post-war experience. Elsewhere, Freedman notes that *High Castle*, in staging U.S. defeat in World War II, asks if America really did win "in the sense, that is, of really triumphing in the name of those values of freedom and peace most widely upheld in postwar American nationalism" (2000: 175). And we have seen already that Rickels points to these amalgamations as part of a

dialectic between constructions of “California” and “Germany” that play out post-war anxieties over German reintegration and American capitalism. Yet while these interpretations are surely useful for comprehending particular left-wing anxiety in the post-war period, culminating in the emergence of the New Left in the 1960s, there is another valence to this dialectical transference, which reaches beyond Nazi Germany and into the history of the American West.

There is, though, a further change in the mid-1960s, whereby the cartoonish Nazi scientist gives way to Germanic characters who are regular working stiffs. This is, in part, an ossification of a Cold War perspective, where the Soviet Union is cemented as the contemporary nemesis in the American nationalist imaginary. But it is also an acknowledgment of the sheer domination of American capital as an unassailable global force. Suvin refers to this representational shift in *Martian Time-Slip* by comparing two of its lowly Germanic characters to its American capitalists: “Steiner and Zitte were small fry compared to the Americans of Teutonic descent Leo and Arnie” (Suvin in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al, 1992: 8). Identifying the same tension in *Palmer Eldritch*, Suvin designates the novel’s main antagonist as a new breed of interplanetary “‘mad capitalist’” (1992: 9). It is this last observation that cracks the mirror, as it were, of the Nazi-American dialectic.

If the question of German reintegration loomed large in the years following the end of the Second World War, then nothing could be more fitting than the fact that the greed of western governments and private businesses set out to cripple the prospects of a partial solution from the beginning. Gimbel reminds us with sufficient frankness that the extractive practices sanctioned by Harry Truman at the end of the War were never intended as Cold War policy; the latter was, however, “an excuse for riding roughshod over American denazification policies in Germany and immigration and naturalization laws in the United States in the interests of exploiting German scientific and technical know-how for the benefit of the American military-industrial complex” (1990: 343). If we apply this knowledge to the sketch of von Braun and state and private extractive practices above, what becomes apparent is the ebbing of a cause-and-effect understanding of oppression that was written large in the struggle against fascism. The fascistic and “totalitarian” materials utilised by

Dick in the early 1950s are treated as instruments of repressive state apparatuses and propaganda machinery that threaten in a more literal way to take hold in the U.S., if they have not already. But increasingly, the very notion of Nazification becomes terrifyingly abstract and inaccessible. The gold rush for German industrial assets transforms Nazi atrocities into American capital, but it also reopens the frontier history of the latter. It is no accident, then, that in *Martian Time-Slip* and *Palmer Eldritch*, rocket trips to Mars effectively transport us reproductions of the American West. Von Braun should offer some stability as an artefact connecting the exploitative capitalist present to the history of Nazi terror, but instead his presence offers only endless deferral through the uneven territories of Californian history.

Off-World Cowboy Romance

What stands out in the sketch of Dick's sf short stories and mainstream novels above is their sense of space. It is clear that Dick understands the social and cultural tensions developing in the late 1950s as mediated through spatial signifiers. Thus we get such conflicting yet overlapping settings as bomb shelters, suburban housing developments, and country ranches. At the same time, these spaces show us paranoid worlds, worlds that are falling apart, worlds made alien by production, and worlds bound up in solipsism. These, we have seen, present their own particular restrictions and obfuscations. Notably, though, what is present in all of these texts is a consciousness of the way that changes in political, economic, and social power and organisation require any cultural engagement with these factors to continually reassess and struggle over the conceptualisation of reality. It would be much later that Dick formalised the two question at the centre of his work – "'What is reality?' and 'What constitutes the authentic human being'" (Dick in Sutin, 1995 [1978]: 260) – but already by the end of the 1950s, there is a clear sense of them working dialectically and to engage with the politics of everyday life.

I have gone some way to depict how Dick uses genre to depict the dialectical development of history. This approach, I have argued, also brings out that more characteristically Jamesonian formulation of genre – although it is prevalent in Williams, too – of dominant modes of production coagulating, becoming decadent, and consequently invoking challenging and anachronistic modes. Worlds overrun by stagnation and degradation are Dick's meat and bread, but in *Martian Tie-Slip* we are faced with a structure of reality that is particularly charged by history as a myth of progress and as a dangerous process of ideological reconstruction. In many respects, this negates the utopian potentialities that both Jameson and Williams find in cultural production, and places Dick's own "partial solutions to the Menace" in a far more liminal position than before. *Martian Time-Slip* presents us with the frontier as an outer limit, as an impasse or fold, an exit door that leads inwards, to paraphrase the title of one of Dick's later short stories. But it is not altogether despairing: there is a contemplativeness to its meticulous construction, which hides behind the surface disruptions. Time slips, it is spatialized, it fragments, it contradicts. The question is whether such instabilities can be turned towards hope or if they reproduce anti-utopian despair.

The world of *Martian Time-Slip* presents us with a cascade of contradictions that make it bewildering to get to grips with. We are faced with a landscape that is marketed to prospective émigrés as a new New World, but is, for all intents and purposes, an arid wasteland, stripped of its resources by political powers and corporate interests. Indeed, the novel makes it clear from the very beginning that whatever potential Mars may once have held has long since been extracted, in the case of its precious minerals, literally: "'there are no diamonds. The UN got them'" (1964: 5). Yet settlers still grow their own produce, households have small gardens which must be vigilantly maintained, and the envied Israeli settlement produces a bountiful citrus crop, which is Mars' only (legal) export. Mars' other identifiable sources of production are cattle ranching and dairy farming, which are hanging on despite the harsh environmental conditions. Yet these meagre industries are more anachronistic than hard-earned achievements for the human species. Moreover, they are the

result of the colonial displacement and oppression of the native Martians – the "Bleekmen" – some of whom have been indentured to dangerous mining operations and as servants to wealthy humans.

For those who can afford it, life on Mars is made tolerable by the steady flow of legal and black market imports. Meanwhile, where production falters maintenance is king. On the Martian frontier, there are no rugged pioneers resembling those of the Wild West, who, to quote John F. Kennedy's New Frontier speech, "gave up their safety, their comfort and sometimes their lives to build a new world" (1960). What we have instead are repairmen, who just about manage to keep life ticking over. As a result, Mars' repair industry constitutes the main source of localised power, arranged under a system of baronial capitalism. But this form of exploitation is itself under threat by off-world interference. The UN and Earth's ubiquitous workers' co-operative are planning a joint venture to claim unsettled Martian land, which proffers both opportunity and ruin for Mars' elites.

This brings us to the plot proper, which focuses on Jack Bohlen, a repairman who is taken into the service of Mars' chief oligarch Arnie Kott, the head of the plumbers' union. Arnie rules over the plumbers' union settlement like a "feudal baron" (Dick, 1964: 90). He commands total control over his fiefdom and enjoys the finest luxuries that can be obtained on Mars – including a harpsichord that he cannot get to tune properly. What bothers him, though, are the rumours swirling around a potential UN land grab. There is big money to be made from this if he can find out where the UN are looking to buy and get in first, but he is not the only one with this idea. Leo Bohlen, Jack's father, is a big-time realty speculator who represents a consortium on Earth. Arnie does not have the same money or influence that his Earth competitors do – arriving on Mars Leo already knows where to find the UN land and what they are going to build there – so he resorts to a more outlandish strategy to get ahead.

Some schizophrenics, Arnie remembers, have the ability of precognition; therefore, if he can get his hands on a schizophrenic with the power of foresight, he can get a head start on the Earth speculators. To help him track down a suitable candidate, Arnie turns to Dr Glaub, a financially hard-up and ethically dubious character who works at children's psychiatric hospital in the Israeli zone.

Glaub singles out Manfred Steiner, the autistic child of one of Jack's neighbours, as a suitable candidate and advises Jack on how to construct a machine that will enable them to communicate with Manfred.[9] The hair-brained scheme shows promise, but it ultimately fails to stop Leo from making the land purchase before Arnie. More disturbingly, the glimpses of the future gleaned from Manfred, who experiences the future in simultaneity with the novel's main timeline, are terrifying images of ruin and decay brought about by the UN settlement. On top of this, it becomes clear that rather than decoding Manfred's futurity, Manfred is exerting some inexplicable mental force over the rest of the characters, which starts to warp their perceived environments and experiences of time.

Arnie's last role of the dice is to try and reverse time, which he believes Manfred controls. The idea, developed through conversations with his Bleekman servant Heliogabalus, is that by combining Manfred's power with the Bleekman's oracular artefact, "Dirty Knobby," Arnie will be able to undo Leo's successful land grab. Unfortunately for Arnie, the consequences of this venture are dire. Having trekked into the desert to locate Dity Knobby, he is exposed to a reversal in time which shows him the same degraded reality that Manfred experiences. When he is returned to the present timeline he cannot believe that it is real, even when he is shot by a disgruntled black marketer. Arnie dies, believing that any moment he will snap out of what he thinks is a fake reality. With Arnie gone, Manfred goes to live with the Bleekman, with whom is able to communicate. While Jack and his family return to something like normality, albeit with the arrival of UN just around the corner.

The proceeding analysis is broken down into three parts. The first examines the spatial and temporal divisions of Mars' geography and considers this in light of Dick's notion of the frontier. This will help us to think in more detail about how the frontier engages with the ideological underpinnings of history and to consider how this is entwined with the structures of genre. I then go on to discuss the way in which the novel deploys monuments as a form of mapping. My argument here is that Dick scars the Martian landscape with historical signifiers which act as sites of potential contestation.

[9] Dick applies the prevailing psychiatric at this time, which understood autism as a form of childhood schizophrenia. See Luckhurst in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 21, 24-25; Kukucalic, 2009: 49.

However, at the same time, these glyphs swirl in a conspiratorial fashion around the possibility of a hidden meaning or revelation, whose forking paths lead us down dead ends and trap us in interpretative loops rather than satisfy us with explanations. Finally, I examine the strange role that death plays as method of connectivity, which poses a tentative solution to solving the riddle of the Martian sands. Tying these three areas together is the ever-present tension between time and space, which are, in many respects, the main protagonists of the novel.

It does not take much scratching of Mars' dust-choked surface for it to become apparent that *Martian Time-Slip* is a text predicated on boundaries. In the short stories, power structures enforce boundary constraints through a combination of consumerism, anticommunism, and nostalgia. Whereas the mainstream novels shift their focus from political paranoia to reification; the physical limits of place being distorted by the limitations of the bourgeois subject: Jim Fergesson cannot grasp the new infrastructure and new streams of capital taking hold of his surroundings; Fay Hume's Marin County ranch is a prison house of her class and gender conditions. These thematic preoccupations not only reflect overt socio-political anxieties, but are linked to the means of cultural production itself. The physical and ideological constraints invoked by the procession of fallout shelters, disintegrating suburbs, and cramped spaceships cannot help but reflect the constraints of the magazine short story. While the depiction of urban and rural geographies collapsing into the suburban home and the solipsistic viewpoint echoes the wry remark that Dick once made about the main restriction of the novel: "the requirement that the protagonist be liked enough or familiar enough to the reader" (Dick in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al, 1992: 16).

The novels of the 1960s take a more direct approach in marking their spatial boundaries. In a number of these texts, Dick uses land division as a prominent motif and method for structuring narrative. In *Time Out*, the novel's central mystery is founded on the simulation of the protagonist's environment and the plot revelation that Earth is at war with dissidents on the Moon; *High Castle* divides the East and West coasts between Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, with a small neutral

zone in the middle, dispersing its characters across them; *We Can Build You* (1972 [1962]; referred to as *"Build*" from here on) invokes the political and territorial divisions of the American Civil War through its Abraham Lincoln and Edwin M. Stanton automata; whereas *The Game-Players of Titan* turns the U.S. into a Monopoly board.

Martian Time-Slip echoes these texts, carving up its geography into a number of spatial subdivisions and enclosures. The most blatant of these is the separation of Earth and Mars. This planetary division brings with it a number of structural and ideological rifts. First of all, Earth is the wealthier, overpopulated, and heavily industrialised superior in this relationship. There is no secret about emigration being a marketing trick, dressing up the hostile Martian planes in the romantic garb of a new West. As Jack's wife, Silvia, reflects wistfully at the beginning of the novel: "We were promised so much, in the beginning" (Dick, 1964: 3). This promise, it transpires, is more a ploy to exploit Earth's overabundant workforce, while the UN has since lost interest with Mars in its desire to seek out new territories to exploit. Thus in this spatial division we start to see a temporal fissure opening: the new colonies are forgotten backwaters; the New World offers little more than the squalor of nostalgia.

The Martian colonies are divided up into different settler groups, the majority of which are defined by nationality; however, the main settlement, which Arnie presides over, belongs to the plumbers' union. These are then divided into rural, suburban, and urban geographies, although, as we have seen in Dick's mainstream novels, such distinctions are made murky by the way that geography is organised around the suburban home, which has an entropic effect on spatial distinctions. This is undergirded by the latticework of ancient canals that cut across Mars' surface. While these suggest movement and infrastructural ingenuity, their waters are stagnant and rationed by the UN.

Finally, there are the divisions between settled land and "the authentic frontier" (1964: 7), which only the Bleekmen inhabit. These geographic boundaries are bound to the pronounced colonial racism directed towards the Bleekmen. However, somewhat ironically, the transient

communities of the latter break up the topography of private property, disregarding these artificial divisions imposed on the land by the human populace.

These representations of space are in turn opened up, blocked off, and intermingled through the spatial effects of the text's multiple narrative foci. But what really complicates this structure and makes the novel so interesting is, as its title implies, the notion of time. Temporality operates on two different levels here, neither of which are completely separate or homogenous, but are clearly identifiable as diachronic and synchronic processes. I will come back to the function of time shortly; however, before doing so, I want to look at the spatial divisions of Mars in more detail.

The philosophical question that underpins *Martian Time-Slip*'s social critique asks whether time can be liberated from the social constraints imposed by capital. In other words: is the future available to us as a space of possibility or does the promise of change only produce further limits? To begin to understand how the novel works through this idea, I want to sketch out some of the contradictions inherent within the more "open" politics emerging in the 1960s. Luckhurst begins his decade study of 1960s sf by arguing that countercultural production was driven by tensions emanating from political liberalisation; here the "Liberalization of laws on abortion, homosexuality, civil rights and censorship compete with moments where the same legal and political institutions panicked and sought to constrain these freedoms" (2005: 141). Elsewhere, Paul Buhle notes "The unwillingness of the Kennedy administration to order adequate protection for the Freedom Riders, and the effectiveness of direct action in winning specific goals, suggested the limits of government help" (2013: 225). While Jameson proffers: "the legacy of the Kennedy regime to the development of a 60s politics may well have been the rhetoric of youth and of the 'generation gap'; which he exploited, but which outlived him and dialectically offered itself as an expressive form through which the political discontent of American students and young people could articulate itself" (1984: 183). Kennedy himself, in his declaration of a New Frontier, offered both the optimism of a new era of American progress, as well as a deep-seated wariness of global isolation and the enemy within. This offers us a glimpse of how new freedoms brought about their own constraints. What is important

about these contradictions is that they open up space for political resistance and change, while at the same time are curtailed by the spurious image of these liberties directed by government policy, mass media, and the increasing pull of free market ideology.

With this ideological topography in mind, Dick's Mars is less imbued with the optimism of an emergent New Left than it is with the scepticism of the Frankfurt School theorists who influenced them. Even the feeling of optimism surrounding Kennedy, whom Dick admired, does not break through here, rather the Martian settlements, squatting under the monolithic FDR Mountains, invoke the squalor of American capitalism as refracted through Kennedy's New Frontier, Eisenhower's military-industrialism, the industrial pillage of Germany and Nazi transference, and the New Deal. This is conveyed in the rumours that circulate around the UN's plans to claim land in the FDR Mountains. One possibility is that they intend to establish an Edenic national park to attract new emigrants. Another suggests the building of an energy plant to enable heavy industry on Mars. While a third pegs it as a site for a new military base. None of these turn out to be true, but they have the effect of ossifying historical speculation and conflating it with potentiality.

What far outweighs the use-value of these projects is the fact that this reopening of the frontier presents economic potential for those with enough capital and business nous to act on it. Land speculation, Arnie ruminates, is set to become like "the first year of colonisation" (Dick, 1964: 77). It is Leo Bohlen, though, who reveals the UN's true plans and motivations: "'Multiple-unit dwellings. Whole tracts of them, mile after mile, with shopping centres, complete – supermarkets, hardware stores, drugstores, laundries, ice cream parlours'" (1964: 118). The UN's aim is to entice new colonists with free transportation and heavily discounted land tracts. More sinister, however, is that the site sits on top of the original water source for Mars' canals. This means that not only will the UN have its own private water source for its developments, it will control the source for the whole of Mars. Leo's plan is to get in quick and buy the land that the UN wants then sell it to them: "'We're going to buy it in great pieces […] and then at once subdivide'" (1964: 119). Yet the real losers here will not be the UN, as Jack realises, but those who pay taxes and subsidies to them and

their partner, the workers' co-op. What is equally disturbing is that we have already seen this kind of monolithic commercial edifice posed as a menace in *Humpty Dumpty*, in the eerie, near alien, construction site that Fergesson visits. Here the wheels of progress start to look worryingly regressive; the promise of the future actively drags Mars into the past.

Jari Lanci identifies a central preoccupation of Dick's writing as "how control over time could become a weapon for the protection of an established order and a political means for deeper and more effective social control" (Lanci in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 101). Indeed, from what we have seen so far, the future as presented in *Martian Time-Slip* looks to be denied any potential of its freeing from capital. Therefore, if its spatial divisions offer an apparent variability, this does not equate to greater individual liberty, but in fact infers the negative: that all future variables and possibilities are speculative commodities for existing political and economic structures. Yet hope can be located in history's contested territories; myths can be inherently demystifying; liminal figures can mobilise resistance and open up new spaces. But a mass media culture predicated on the reproducibility of the image, televisual spectacle, and advertisement presents new terms also. I have said that in the short stories, the past is eroded through commodity fetishism, while the mainstream novels tilt the other way, preserving a particular worldview in an all-encompassing bubble. Here, however, the threat is that networks of meaning defer this contested space: creating feedback loops and simulations that dislodge collective memory.

Martian Time-Slip transforms the cliché of learning from the past into a particularly interesting novum. One of the more troubling institutions in the text is the public school, which is attended by Jack's son David. The school is controlled by a central master circuit, but it presents a cornucopia of teaching machines representing figures from western history: Aristotle, Sir Francis Drake, Abraham Lincoln, Julius Caesar, Winston Churchill, Mark Twain, Emperor Tiberius, Immanuel Kant, Philip II of Spain, and Thomas Edison. These machines, Jack reflects, constitute "the tutorial system of which the UN was so proud" (Dick, 1964: 9). Yet something is clearly wrong with the school, its teachers, and methods. For example, the Sir Francis Drake machine not only teaches

English history but also “fundamentals of masculine civility”; similarly, the Lincoln machine teaches American history and “basics of modern warfare and the contemporary state” (1964: 9-10). It is, then, a fundamentally imperialistic and patriarchal education that the school provides. Thus its ideological function is to enforce a hegemonic structure of history and, therefore, reality. Here western history merges with the frontier, establishing an ironic compound of expansionism and calcification – at the outer limits of civilization knowledge has become stagnant.

This is only one effect of the school, which is not so different from the disconcerting Cold War education depicted in ‘Foster’, where children are taught to make traps and weapons, and to dig (ominously it is never specified if the latter is for shelter or graves). What is different here is the school’s superstructural function. As Jack ruminates, “the school was there not to inform or educate, but to mold, and along severely limited lines. It was the link to their inherited culture, and it peddled that culture, in its entirety to the young” (1964: 60-1). This has a particularly sinister dual meaning, as the school does not just seek to mould its students in a particular image, but functions as a eugenic sorting office for weeding out mentally “defective stock” (1964: 33). It is this that disturbs Jack so much. Jack has migrated to Mars because his former job on a factory production line and the homogenising experience of living in a self-contained urban complex brought about a schizophrenic break: “‘it was emigrate or go mad’” (1964: 71). He recalls suffering what he supposes was a hallucination, but wonders if it might have been a vision of the future, in which his manager appeared as an automaton, an extension of the factory itself: “He saw, through the man’s skin, his skeleton. It had been wired together, the bones connected with fine copper wire. The organs, which had withered away, were replaced by artificial components” (1964: 66-67). Here schizophrenia connects interplanetary space-time as a return of the repressed. Jack’s hallucination on the home planet, provoked by social alienation and alienated labour, transforms the human into a machine. This is then translated into the gaggle of historical automata in the school. Indeed, the school is designed to replicate a “homely” (in the English sense of the word) environment, which is precisely what makes it *unheimlich*, as Jack remarks to the Kindly Daddy teaching machine: “‘I think this Public

School and you teaching machines are going to rear another generation of schizophrenics, the descendants of people like me who are making a fine adaptation to this new planet'" (1964: 72). Thus what started out looking like newness and potentiality – the forgotten promise that Silvia mouths, the "'primitive frontier environment with more freedom'" (1964: 71) that Jack sought out as a cure – is only a "maledictory circle" (Aldiss in Mullen and Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., 1992: 40), an isolated network reproducing its own delusional realities.

The world outside the school is no less weighed down with historical baggage. I have already mention the FDR Mountains, to which we can add canals named after William Butler Yeats, Herodotus, George Washington, and Senator Robert A. Taft, as well as a monument to Alger Hiss, adorned with the inscription "the first UN martyr" (Dick, 1964: 9). The Martian surface, like the interior of the school, is scarred with metanarrative, particularly that of American politics. In our reality there is no existing monument to Alger Hiss, the former government official brought before the House Un-American Activities Committee under charges of spying for the USSR. There is, however, a grand monument dedicated to his contemporary, Robert A. Taft, after whom Dick names one of the Martian canals. On the surface, the placement of the Hiss statue in the centre of the plumber's union settlement is an ironic wink to the Taft-Hartley Act, the latter constituting a red scare policy introduced by Taft in the late 1940s to curtail union power. There is, however, further significance to these juxtaposed figures. The Taft Memorial was unveiled on Capitol Hill in 1959 and accepted on behalf of the senate by Kennedy's 1960 election rival Richard Nixon – who would later become the principle bogeyman of Dick's novels. Notably, this was not the first edifice on Capitol Hill to bear the mark of the Taft family: the Supreme Court building was commissioned by Robert A.'s father, twenty-seventh president and chief justice, Howard A. Taft, in 1912. The latter was designed by the conservative architect Cass Gilbert, while the bronze likeness of Robert A. Taft that adorns his memorial was sculpted by another right-wing artist Wheeler Williams. Geoffrey Blodget (1985) has described Cass as a figure who rose to prominence under the conservative organisation of his profession in the early twentieth century, but was buried beneath its rubble when its institutions

collapsed in the 1920s. In this respect, the Supreme Courthouse, Cass' last commission, "became a monumental tribute to a past with no coherent future" (Blodget, 1985: 617). Thus the map of Dick's Martian landscape starts to look something like the inverse of the rhizomic conspiracy of signs that threatens Oedipa Mass' worldview in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965). Rather than ambiguity and "excluded middles" (Pynchon, 1965: 125) opening up political space, what Dick depicts here is a kind of interpretative embolism. The opacity of these monuments and stagnant waterways conveying power's consolidation in a topographical semiotics.

The Hiss monument does, however, present some ambiguity and liminality: the suspected red thumbing his nose at Senator Taft. In this respect, Hiss's estranging monument supplements that central site of American political struggle, the Lincoln Memorial, which from Marion Anderson's 1939 performance to the March on Washington in 1963 was a prominent site of contestation for the Civil Rights Movement. This linkage is an enticing one given the relative contemporaneity of *Martian Time-Slip* to these events, as well as the fact that Dick was researching Lincoln for *Build* around this time, and that the early 1960s marked the centenary of the American Civil War. However, any potential hope this might instil is blemished by the way the novel filters mass organisation through the corruption of union power, while depicting the racially oppressed Bleekmen as degraded Noble Savages capable of resistance only through their passive cultural difference. Indeed, the situation of the Hiss monument in the capital of plumber's union as a dedication to his service to the UN – for whom Hiss really was a proponent – is more indicative of a substitution rather than a viable alternative. As I have argued above, it is through the Hiss monument that an ominous history leaks in, acting, in this respect, as a temporal wound. Therefore, I want to suggest that in *Martian Time-Slip* a chink of optimism is refracted through the text by other means: namely, death.

Norbert Steiner is by no means one of Dick's most likable characters, but he is understatedly fascinating. He is the father of the autistic boy Manfred and works as both a health food salesman and a black marketeer, smuggling luxury items onto Mars via unmanned Swiss rockets. While

salesmen are embedded into Dick's 1950s pastiche, Steiner's presence on a grim frontier world in need of continuous maintenance makes him particularly anachronistic. Indeed, this is alluded to at the beginning of the novel when David Bohlen is perplexed by the fact that Norbert "'doesn't know anything about tools'" (Dick, 1964: 3) and that the Steiners cannot manage their water ration. Although the Martian frontier retains the suburban characteristics that we have encountered in Dick's earlier work, what is unique here is the particular way in which its inhabitants conflate newness with self-reliance. Jack believes the simplicity of Martian life will cure his schizophrenia, Silvia is scornful of the Steiners for not being able to look after their house and garden, Arnie believes that he and his fellow colonists are "new creatures" (1964: 18) and begrudges his brother for flaunting his Earthly luxuries. All, however, are hypocritical in these beliefs, and this in turn perpetuates the contradictory notion of nostalgia for a Turnerian frontier as a new and improved way of life. Norbert's social position places him outside this worldview; to this extent, he and his family are outsiders.

Norbert's ostracised status is undergirded by the social stigma of having an autistic child. As we have seen with the public school, Mars is not the kind of place that tolerates difference. This is reinforced further in an exchange Norbert has with a restaurant owner who conflates phocomelia with mental illness. Notably the former is the condition linked to the West-German-developed drug thalidomide, with which Steiner's brother-in-law suffers, although he enjoys a good life thanks to Canadian-built prosthetics. Thus in his portrayal of the Steiner family, Dick manoeuvres anxiety regarding German reintegration to convey American xenophobia and a particularly toxic form of ableism, which are bound simultaneously to the rhetoric of self-reliance and the rugged frontiersman.

Norbert, however, is not easy to sympathise with. He is ashamed of Manfred, believing that his son's illness is evidence of something defective in himself and his wife.[10] He is also weighed down

[10] Luckhurst reminds us that a popular belief in the 1960s was the notion that autism was the result of damaged parent-child relations, embodied in the "'refrigerator mother' unable to love her child" (Luckhurst in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 25); a misogynistic diagnosis that is treated uncritically by Dick.

by the same kind of prejudices that the restaurant owner conveys: his health food business is no quirk, but an affirmation that "to him, physical and moral health were one" (1964: 27-8). Norbert's problems are brought to a head when he learns that the psychiatric facility for "anomalous" children – Camp Ben-Gurion – that Manfred attends is threatened with closure, which, if it goes ahead, will also mean his extermination. Anne Esterhazy, Arnie's ex-wife and business partner, with whom he has an anomalous child, tells Norbert that: "Back home they see the existence of anomalous children on Mars as a sign that one of Earth's major problems has been transplanted into the future, because we *are* the future, to them" (1964: 33; emphasis in original). Yet Norbert's response to this news is both despair and, disturbingly, support for the proposed murder of his child. Rather than maliciousness, however, he is carried along by a forlorn resignation to his own lack of agency. His notions of inadequacy and inability to affect change constitute a totalising depressive perspective from which he cannot break. Yet he does, in a moment of desperation, tell the restaurant owner that he has an anomalous son, whom, he believes, someday "'will emerge into the world once more'" (1964: 40). While this may proffer a sign of restoration and reconciliation, it is swiftly nullified when Norbert leaves the bar and commits suicide by running headlong into a tractor bus.

Norbert's death is the catalyst that brings the novel's disparate bunch of characters together. Nevertheless, this is not the kind of self-sacrifice that Dick endorses happily: Norbert is a miserable person in all respects, but his death is tragic in the sense that from his isolated perspective it presents the only solution to his problems.[11] Thus, as the event that lays the foundation for interconnectivity between characters, it is shrouded in a melancholic ambiguity, but suggests that any tentative hope lies in the restoration of sociality. Given that Norbert's son is positioned as the novel's most isolated character, it is through him that I argue the novel pursues this goal.

Soon after Norbert's suicide, Silvia observes, "that little man's death has reached out and touched others, and the coldness is spreading" (1964: 45). This ominous statement is mirrored later

[11] Dick had a great attachment to the characters he created. In a short essay titled 'Notes Made Late at Night by a Weary SF Writer', he describes the pain it causes him to have to leave his characters behind after he finishes writing a story (Dick in Sutin, 1995 [1968]: 19).

in the text by Jack, her husband: "Death upsets everyone, makes them do peculiar things; it sets a radiating process of action and emotion going that works its way out, farther and farther, to embrace more people and things" (1964: 100). One implication here is that this central event has contaminated all those it has touched, driving people to do terrible things and bind themselves to others in clandestine pacts. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence for this: both Jack and Silvia have affairs during the course of the novel, Jack is coalesced into helping Arnie, and the former is made a party to his father's dubious land grab. What is worse, the "coldness" that Silvia detects clearly picks out an entropic process eroding reality. Yet the way Norbert is depicted as the cause of these developments is not strictly accurate. The conditions Silvia and Jack describe already exist; they are embedded in the obfuscating networks of power tied up in Mars' canals and monuments, as well as in the schizophrenia-inducing standardisation implemented by the public school. Therefore, while the fallout of Norbert's death is not pleasant, it does initiate broader analysis on the part of the novel's characters as to how reality is structured.

As has been observed by several scholars, a key meta-text in *Martian Time-Slip* is the anthology of existential psychology *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (1958).[12] It was here that English readers were first introduced to Ludwig Binswanger's case study 'The Case of Ellen West', which, Sutin notes, "terrified Phil" (2005: 431) when he read it and is the source for the recurring schizophrenic tomb worlds in his 1960s novels. West – a pseudonym – was a female patient treated by Binswanger in the late-1920s, whom he diagnosed initially with melancholia and subsequently schizophrenia. West committed suicide shortly after ending her treatment with Binswanger, but the latter did not write up her case study until some twenty years

[12] There are a number of scholarly sources that site the influence of existential psychiatry on Dick's writing. In *Philip K. Dick: Canonical Writer of the Digital Age* (2009), Kucukalic notes that Dick's reading of the tripartite realms of experience set out in *Existence* – Umwelt, Mitwelt, and Eigenwelt – helped support his more "individualistic approach to the human psyche, against the limitations of culture and science" (2009: 34). Rickels' provides a lengthy analysis of the thematic and structural influence of 'The Case of Ellen West' on *Martian Time-Slip* in *I Think I Am Philip K. Dick* (2010). Anthony Wolk's essay 'The Swiss Connection: Psychological Systems in the Novels of Philip K. Dick' examines the impact that reading Swiss existential psychiatry has on several of Dick's novels from the late 1950s and 1960s. Roger Luckhurst includes existential psychiatry as part of Dick's ongoing dialectical interaction with the psychiatric field in the essay 'Diagnosing Dick'.

later. What is particularly interesting about this, then, is that the time lapse highlights the study's own temporal slippages and interpretative distortions. This has led Naamah Akavia to argue that Binswanger developed his theory of *Daseinanalyse* (the name deriving from Martin Heidegger's untranslatable existential term *Dasein*) as a way of comprehending West's suicide, which he resigned himself to as an inevitability of her condition:

> Binswanger's interpretation of Ellen West's suicide as her final attempt to achieve authentic existence seems to be his attempt to endow with meaning this almost inconceivable action – one that is irrevocable, and in hindsight also inevitable – and to work through the helplessness, guilt, and anger, which he must have felt in the face of this deed. (2008: 140)

This casts a shadow over Norbert's death, although his is fate is not a straightforward reproduction of West's. What must have perturbed Dick as much as any details of West's illness is Binswanger's resignation, which does not sit comfortably with the former's prevailing humanism. The idea of institutionalised power structures dictating what constitutes an authentic expression of being certainly rubs up against Dick's investment in the little man. With this in mind, Dick is juxtaposed to Binswanger; Norbert's death is a failing of a social order that invokes isolation and denies empathy, not an existential truth.

Arnie's mistress, Doreen Anderton, raises this same framing of schizophrenia with Jack: "'The existential psychiatrists often say to let them go ahead and take their lives; it's the only way for some of them…the vision becomes too awful to bear'" (Dick, 1964: 95). This, as Rickels explains, is what Binswanger believes is ultimately the only way for West to break from the *Schlinge* (the noose or garrotte) imposed by her cyclical neuroses (2010: 101). However, while Jack understands this position – his own schizophrenic hallucinations are too terrible and estranging to be worked in to standard perception – he resolves to continue struggling: "*I intend to keep trying*" (Dick, 1964: 97; emphasis in the original). Grim determination and a tentative belief in the restorative qualities of

empathy are the insignias of Dick's little man; in a frontier environment where every egress seems only to fold back on itself there seem few other options. The story that radiates out from Norbert's death is full of interpretive dead ends, but it begins to prod and tinker, wiring up connections between its characters in the hope that they will form the basis of new networks of communication. Indeed, Jack finds temporary solace in his extramarital relationship with Doreen, which is sexual, but, more importantly, an outlet for him to talk through his schizophrenia.

Manfred's autism – framed as a "childhood form of schizophrenia" (1964: 61)" – makes him incommunicable to those living in standard time: "'the environment around him is so accelerated that he cannot cope with it, in fact, he is unable to perceive it properly, precisely as we would be if we faced a speeded-up television programme, so that objects whizzed by so fast as to be invisible, and sound was gobbledegook'" (1964: 37). Arnie's theory is that if Manfred's own sense of time were accelerated then he might be able see into the future. However, the problem is that Manfred has no language and there is no means of translating what he sees. Therefore, what Glaub proposes, lifting the idea straight from *Scientific America*, is to build a slow-motion chamber that will allow them to talk to Manfred and to teach him to communicate.

Like the schizoid affective personality that Dick outlines in an essay from the mid-1960s, 'Schizophrenia and "The Book of Changes"', Manfred is "having it all *now*, whether he wants it or not" (Dick in Sutin, 1995 [1965]: 176; emphasis in the original). Time for Manfred is abhorrently slow, yet while he appears in the main timeline as a child, he exists simultaneously in a state of purgatorial entropy as a decrepit old man in the future. It is a strange and disconcerting paradox, to which Arnie's experiment, despite its dubious motives, appears to offer Manfred at least the potential to integrate with the world that races past him in a dizzying blur. However, Arnie's plan is predicated on the future existence of the UN's development in the FDR Mountains, which is precisely where Manfred's future self is trapped. Therefore, this attempt to bring him into contact with the present becomes a means of closing off the future, submitting to entropy for commercial gain. In this respect,

Manfred becomes a means of mining the future, except rather than heavy machinery, this requires television screens and spools of magnetic tape.

Indeed, there is no chance of Manfred really being allowed to return to the world, as it were. As Norbert recognises early on, the method that Glaub proposes cannot help Manfred in any practical way, it only proposes to make him accessible to others: "'How can you help such an individual function? Did you intend for him to stay in the closed chamber with the slowed-down picture for the rest of his life?'" (Dick, 1964: 37). Jack, too, raises a similar query. While he begins working on the slow-motion chamber in a passive way, tinkering with it as a means of preoccupying his mind, he starts to wonder if the best course of treatment for Manfred would be to send him to live with the Bleekmen: "Possibly their sense of time is close to his…to the Bleekmen, we Earthmen may very well be hypomanic types, whizzing about at enormous velocity, expending huge amounts of energy over nothing at all" (1964: 121). This, however, raises the further problem of consigning Manfred to a life outside the settlers from Earth.

Yet there is no doubt that something is clearly amiss with the way that the colonists experience and frame time as a fixed and objective entity, which implies that the problem is not solely Manfred's autism, but is a condition produced by a society that cannot see beyond the constrictive epistemological frameworks that maintain its structure. Jack's schizophrenia gets progressively worse as he works for Arnie and as he spends more and more time with Manfred, which causes him to believe that the latter is exerting a kind of entropic force over him:

> 'It almost seems to me that Manfred does more than know the future; in some way he *controls* it, he can make it come out the worst possible way because that's what seems natural to him, that's how he sees reality. It's as if being around him we're sinking into his reality. It's starting to seep over us and replace our own way of viewing things'". (1964: 139)

This passage comes during a fascinating piece of experimental writing by Dick, in which he conveys Manfred's altered temporality by fragmenting and repeating a set scene that takes place in Arnie's apartment. Here the formal disruption of the narrative – the novel's most blatant instance of time-slippage – causes us to reflect on the assumed self-sufficiency and "wholeness" of the novel itself. While ambiguity remains as to whether it is Manfred manipulating time or if time is coming unstuck because of the contradictions imposed by the social conditions of Earth and Mars, what is fascinating about this combination of entropy and time-slippage is the way in which it exposes the novel as itself something that is *produced*. Just like Jack's traumatising schizophrenic hallucination on Earth, which, he wonders, may in fact be more real than anything he had previously seen, the sequence of narrative slippages momentarily exposes Dick's novel as a piece of (malfunctioning) machinery within the culture industry.

As to whether the cause of these effects is Manfred's infectious psychic aura or a symptom of a wider cultural pathology, we are given a clue shortly after the passage above, in the section of the novel in which Jack and Manfred visit the public school. Here Jack experiences a near total psychotic breakdown, as he becomes convinced that Manfred has penetrated the automated systems of the school and begun to manipulate them. What is equally plausible, however, is that as Jack descends further into the pit of psychosis, he becomes increasingly aware of the schizophrenia-inducing systems around him. The school, as we have seen, is predicated on the skewed ideology of moulding a new and improved society on Mars through a form of education that is incompatible with Martian life. Education, in this respect, can only offer a worldview that will not square with its material conditions. Jack understands this more than ever as he, too, is confronted with terrifying visions that cannot be integrated into humdrum reality. Thus we arrive at another double bind: schizophrenia provides insight but at great psychic cost.

How, then, can these conflicting diachronic and synchronic temporalities be resolved? To what extent can the logic imbued in Mars' stagnant canals, opaque monuments, and cacophony of robot teachers be reprogrammed? Can the closed loop of the frontier be broken, or can it only create

burnt-out subjects and hollowed out worlds? And, furthermore, what hope is there for the schizophrenic if order is only an ideological prison? For all Norbert's flaws, his resignation to his own lack of agency plants the seed that "doing" is itself a liminal territory, which the likes of Arnie treat as a nostalgic artefact of an imagined past. This is what Thomas Melley calls "agency panic," whose importance

> lies in the way it attempts to conserve a long-standing model of personhood – a view of the individual as a rational, motivated agent with a protected interior core of beliefs, desires, and memories […] [This derives] from the liberal political philosophy of Hobbes and Locke, and has long been celebrated in American political culture, particularly in the guise of 'rugged individualism' and atomistic 'self-reliance'". (2000: 14)

What Norbert conveys is the negative vector of this idea. He has, quite simply, given up with trying to reproduce the paranoid notion that he can gain full control of his actions on this new frontier, but neither does he see any point in finding new ways of seeing. His depressive worldview becomes a crystalline truth, which, when he finally realises its totality, presents its only logical resolution: his suicide.

The dead end that Norbert finds himself in is one that we have seen before, at the Hume house. The latter is, as I have described above, a kind of perspectival prison from which its characters cannot find any satisfactory way to break – Charley kills himself, Jack leaves, and Fay keeps going round in circles. It is also the problem that Dick raises in his mid-1950s essay, where he pronounces that the apocalyptic sf story "never offers a solution to the problem: It merely utters the problem over and over again" (Dick in Sutin 1995 [1955]: 55). Yet if Norbert symbolises an interpretative dead end, which can only be broken through generic reconfiguration, neither Arnie's delusions nor Manfred's informational chaos pose solutions in themselves, they are only different iterations of doom.

In the scene in which Arnie and Manfred reach the Bleekmen's oracle, Dirty Knobby, Arnie is flung back in time, seemingly achieving what he desires: another chance to buy up the UN's land. But, as he quickly finds out, he has entered into a degraded version of the past, which offers only the same entropic reality that Manfred experiences. When he arrives back in the main timeline, he is shot by Norbert's former business partner Otto Zitte, whom Arnie has put out of business. He dies believing that "pretty soon I'll wake up and won't be shot" (Dick, 1964: 217). With Arnie dead, Manfred is freed from his service and goes to live in Mars' wilderness with the Bleekmen. This offers a partial exchange of positions, where Arnie is exposed to the schizophrenia that he has perpetuated through his own "refusal to modify a concept of self that is no longer wholly accurate or useful" (Melley, 2000: 15), while Manfred is permitted a form of sociality and grounding.

Perhaps this is the best outcome that can be hoped for on the entropic frontier of the degraded Martian West: a revenge killing where the victim does not realise his own death, and the emancipation of a subject who is forever locked out of human society. However, this is not quite the end of the story, which offers nothing like a resolution, but delivers a final shock of ambiguity. Like a cyborg Christ, Manfred returns to Martian society as an old man kept alive by "a tangle of pumps and hoses and dials" (Dick, 1964: 224). The scene ranks amongst Dick's most bewildering, both for its sheer oddity and its narrative disruption. What we have experienced up until this point is the future as a return or degraded reproduction of the past, but Manfred's reappearance does not follow this logic. What the latter constitutes, instead, is a textual insertion severed from any kind of sense making outside of the explanation Manfred gives: to say goodbye to his mother and to thank Jack for trying to communicate with him. In this final, appearance he takes the form of a terrible anachronism, a Christ ripping through the membrane of the text. What he offers is nothing like redemption, but the potential to unblock the embolism of a hegemonic construction of history and, therefore, reality through a radical textual act which short circuits the prescribed codes and logics of genre through a distinctively generic imposition: the time-travelling alien with tendrils of prostheses. Manfred does not stay, and the novel turns back to a steady mundane hum, but the strange potential

to disrupt and reconfigure remains: a new frontier is opened from within the structure of genre. Momentarily, the backward fold of the frontier curls out.

Chapter 2: Detection and Conspiracy

In her book *Western and Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction in America* (1987), Cynthia S. Hamilton distinguishes between the optimism of the former in its pre-World War One heyday and the pessimism of the latter as a result of the War and, later, the Depression. Yet the two genres convey numerous similarities, not least because they converge upon the figure of the rugged individual, like the kind of white male settler that Dick parodies in *Martian Time-Slip* through Arnie Kott, who talks about Mars as "a new place […] lived with a new style" (1964: 18). Arnie, as we have seen, is a grievous hypocrite who surrounds himself with trinkets from Earth, but this does not stop him peddling the notion of the Martian frontier as a site of astounding opportunity. What is also visible in Dick's science-fictional West is a pastiche of what Hamilton sees in the novels of the Western writer Zane Grey: "[His] longing to return to a simpler time and less complete society, his distrust of the new-fangled, his sentimental idealism, and his compassion for victims of life's struggle," all of which, Hamilton adds, "reflected his deep links with small-town, middle-class America around the turn of the century" (1987: 25). Dick, we have seen, transforms this small-town ideology into the reified perspective of the suburbanite, the anachronistic worldview of the small businessman, and the dreary outlook of the proletarianized white collar worker. But we have also seen that Dick's Martian frontier and California suburbs present their fair share of mystery. These are less conundrums in the whodunit sense, but interpretative problems that occur as contradictions between subjective experience and totalising social structures. What do you do if, like Jack Bohlen, you know you are descending into schizophrenia, but all the superstructural institutions are geared towards provoking this condition through their skewed notion of reality? Can you rely on your doctor or the hospital, on the police or the state, and if not, how do you construct your own systems of knowledge that are not delusory in their suspicions, hostilities, and general contestations of the hegemonic worldview?

Dick was a lifetime user of the Chinese oracular text the *I Ching*, which Sutin credits him with disseminating to 1960s American culture through his novel *High Castle* (2005: 162). Indeed, Dick

famously used its divinations to shape the latter's plot, consulting it over every potential course of action and interaction. Yet it was not something he indulged in lightly, and while he struggled to pry himself from it, he was simultaneously suspicious of the oracle's ability to shape reality. Especially dangerous, he believed, was the combination of this oracular knowledge with schizophrenia: "if one is schizophrenic to any extent […] knowledge of this type, this absolute presentation of a pattern representing the entire *koinos kosmos* at this *Augenblick* [moment], consists of total knowledge period in view of the fact that for the schizophrenic there is no future anyhow" (1995: 180). The problem that Dick could not shake was that the *I Ching* could act as a provoking intellectual stimulant – a fluxus device that could generate situations and perspectives to work from – but at what point did its consultation start to replace one oppressive reality with another?

Although the prominence of the *I Ching* in *High Castle* is dismissed by Freedman as "protohippie mysticism" (2000: 172), it is a mistake to rebuke its connection to the material conditions and ideological apparatuses at which Dick's social critique takes aim. California's history of uneven economic development has spurred the need for narratives able to make sense of its material abundance and volatile boom and bust cycles. George L. Henderson coins the term for just such a narrative form in his book *California and the Fictions of Capital* (1999): "rural realism". This type of novel promotes a two-faced discourse on rural capital, lauding Western abundance as the means of fulfilling liberal capitalism, while admonishing money as a "troubling and, ironically, meddling presence to bourgeois culture" (Henderson, 1999: xiii). What is visible in Dick's use of the *I Ching* is that it picks up on the use of narrative as an ameliorant for the contradictions we experience in our day-to-day lives. Moreover, he proffers that there is something pathological and obfuscating about this. What Henderson's rural realism depicts is the way in which capital produces its own realist imaginaries, which, rather than challenge capital, undergird its reification. Therefore, what becomes apparent is that Dick's forays into mysticism, his reproductions of rural California, and his interest in new frontiers feed into a broader attempt to map reality's ideological terrain.

At this point, the figure of the gumshoe shuffles out from the shadows. One obvious way to historicise Dick's work in relation to the hard-boiled genre is through geography: Dick spent roughly half of his life in San Francisco, the setting synonymous with Dashiell Hammett's stories, and later moved out to Orange County, a relative stone's throw from Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles. In Hammett, Hamilton finds an unresolvable contradiction between the individual and the social in the iconic figures of Sam Spade and the Continental Op: "competitive individualism is bad because it is divisive, but collective action is impossible because individuals are competitive" (1987: 32). Indeed, this disparity is evinced in Hammett's increasingly radical politics and diminishing interest in writing detective fiction; by the end of the 1930s, he had shifted from writing detective fiction to working for the Communist Party. We have seen in the previous chapter that Dick agonises over similar tensions between the individual and homogenising power structures. Where Hammett and Dick converge in respect to these matters is in their awareness of the increasingly blurry lines between fiction and advertisement. Indeed, Hammett's early fiction was accompanied, not unusually for a freelance writer, by a steady output of advertisements and reviews. In the mid-1920s, ill health prompted him to take up a salaried roll as an advertising manager for a jewellery business. Peter Swirski observes that this multi-disciplinary training helped sharpen Hammett's fiction writing: "knowing the value of each word, knowing how to play the audience, and knowing the concerns of the average man" (2016: 36). This assessment puts poetic gloss on what Hamilton calls "[Hammett's] cynical view of the manipulative nature of writing" (Hamilton, 1987: 128), which is supported by Hammett's own admissions of bending authenticity and authority through his dual status as fiction writer and former detective: "'I found I could sell the stories easily when it became known I had been a Pinkerton man'" (Hammett in Hamilton, 1987: 128). Here we can see that, for Hammett, writer and writing take up the murky positions of artificer and artifice in a way similar to Dick, where "a writer (especially an SF writer) is always first and foremost an 'artificer,' both in the sense of artful craftsman and in the sense of creator of new, 'artificial' but nonetheless possible worlds" (Suvin in Mullen, Csicseray-Ronay, Jr., et al., 1992 [1975]: 4).

While the dissipation of high art into mass culture is more commonly associated with post-war consumption, it is worth noting that literature as advertisement emerges concomitantly with the pulps at the end of nineteenth century. Henderson, for example, singles out three pieces of "ad-fiction" published by the Occidental Fruit Company in 1891. These stories, he argues, convey "an intersection between company talk and literary structure" (Henderson, 1999: 112). There is, of course, a difference between the corporate-penned advertisement that looks like a story and stories sold by writers to magazines; however, it is important to understand that by the time we get to the post-war period, fiction, in its mass-produced form, is already bound up in the business of manufacturing realities which are, for all intents and purposes, fictions of capital.

The detective figure is incorporated into Dick's writing as a spectral representative of the murky underworld of cultural production found in hard-boiled detective fiction. This figure is a dishevelled reproduction of the gritty private eye, whose iconography Ridley Scott went to great lengths to graft onto Dick's writing in *Blade Runner*. My focus in this chapter is on the two novels in Dick's corpus that are most clearly identifiable with the hard-boiled detective genre: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *A Scanner Darkly* (referred to as "*Scanner*" from here on). Just as I have argued is the process behind the reproduction of the Western in *Martian Time-Slip*, these texts recycle themes and generic motifs that are present within pre-existing works, bringing them together as an estranged genre. Conversely, this means that crime, mystery, and all sorts of quests for truth, already feature heavily in Dick's writing prior to the publication of *Do Androids?* What is of interest to me here, as in the previous chapter, is how and why these features come together in relation to wider social and cultural developments.

To make sense of the features of these two novels, as texts reflective of their social and cultural context, further clarification of their chronology is necessary. The first of these texts, *Do Androids?* was published in 1968, with Sutin placing its composition in 1966. *Scanner*, on the other hand, was published almost a decade later in 1977. Dick completed a draft of the novel in the early 1970s, but it was rigorously rewritten in 1975. Significantly, both novels, as with all Dick's great

works, teeter on the brink of some new representational (or post-representational) crisis. *Do Androids?* stands at the threshold of that mythic date – 1967 – at which Jameson designates the beginning of postmodernism proper, while *Scanner* examines the metonymic space opened up by Watergate, starring anxiously into the void of Reagan-era neoliberalism. These historical shifts mean that there are significant generic discontinuities between the two texts, as well as similarities. In *Do Androids?*, we are dealing with a type of detection that measures itself against the hard-boiled fiction of Hammett and Chandler, although Dick's detective is of the worn out white collar variety rather than a no nonsense man of honour. *Scanner* leaves behind a lot of the formal hard-boiled tropes that are incorporated in *Do Androids?* Here detection has become amalgamated with the murkier structure of conspiracy.

The proceeding analysis is divided into two, with the respective sections split across the two texts. I begin by examining the continuities and discontinuities between Dick's early writing and modes of detection, examining how Dick depicts crime and its organisation in the early short story 'Minority Report'. I then proceed to analyse how elements of questing and searching for interpretative keys is important to Dick's sf novels in the late 1950s and early 60s. This brings me to my analysis of *Do Androids?*, which examines the reasons behind the detective's return and its significance to the historical conditions of the late 1960s.

The second half of the chapter focuses on *Scanner* and conspiracy as a new mode of detection. As I argue throughout, detective fiction is a form of reality mapping; however, by the time we get to *Scanner*, the social order, economics, and culture have changed both in themselves and in their relationships with each other to such an extent that the usefulness of detection becomes harder to conceive. Thus my assessment of *Scanner* considers how in the disorienting transition from modernity to postmodernity *conspiracy-as-theory* takes over the cartographic role previously occupied by older modes of detective fiction. Here my argument builds on Jameson's theoretical work on postmodernism, as well as Palmer and Fisher's analyses of *Scanner*. Where I diverge from the latter two critics is in my desire to move beyond a reading of *Scanner* as a despondent critique of

an emergent neoliberal order and postmodern culture, even if the novel itself is uncertain about what hope the future can offer. What I argue, though, is that *Scanner* opens up an historical seam in the hope that it will unleash some of the lost political energies of the 1960s. My understanding here is that Dick is by no means nostalgic or uncritical of the radical politics of the 1960s, but that he considers their spirit of radical change something that can be convoked as a means of dislodging capital's anti-utopianism.

The Dickian Detective

For Hamilton, Chandler's finest novels are his earliest, *The Big Sleep* (1939) and *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), where his iconic gumshoe Philip Marlowe is every bit the "alienated outsider who vindicates that stance by his demonstrable superiority in a society unworthy of his services" (1987: 155). However, by the 1950s, Hamilton argues, "Marlowe began to look anachronistic and absurd" (1987: 155). There is certainly truth in this, but it is the marginality of Marlowe in the *The Long Goodbye* (1953), who is not just outside, but out of phase with a society that has overtaken him, that makes him so compatible with the dangerously solipsistic characters we encounter in Dick's work. However, as Marlowe flickers in and out of reality, it becomes apparent that this fascinating existential effect renders him ill-equipped for providing a sustained social critique of consumerism and the increasingly interlinked strata of government and private industry. In my examination of Dick's 1950s work in the previous chapter, I identify two notable categories: sf short stories that critique consumerism; and mainstream novels that engage with reification as the condition of bourgeois reality. While these bring about their own representational problems, they constitute visible attempts to engage with social change through the dialectic of genre. This is translated into the recurring struggles of Dick's characters to make sense of environments that are becoming increasingly alien to them. By stark contrast, Marlowe is resigned to becoming increasingly cut off

from the world, symbolically spending much of his time in *The Long Goodbye* brooding over chess puzzles in his empty house on a dead-end street.

This goes some way to explaining why Dick does not pay much attention to the hard-boiled genre until the mid-1960s. What we see in *The Long Goodbye* is a mode of production becoming encased in the amber of nostalgia. Indeed, Chandler's stylistic hallmark of eclipsing events with emotions, where it is not the act of murder that produces tragedy, but all the little details that gravitate around it, becomes oddly quaint in a Cold War hierarchy where the monolithic constructions of the state and big business blot out the individual. On top of this, neither the moral code of the lone gumshoe, nor its pejorative inversion, moral corruption, hold up under the introverted perspective of McCarthyist paranoia. As Melley reflects: "the nature of paranoid politics is different after World War II, focused on domestic rather than foreign threats and [is] especially concerned about 'the effects of the mass media'" (2000: 2). In a society that confounds the boundaries of inner and outer through heightening paranoid relations, the potential to be an outsider like Marlowe (and Chandler himself) becomes increasingly difficult.

What is apparent in Dick's short stories from the 1950s is a sense of claustrophobia, where national paranoia compounds global tensions between East and West into tightly bound conspiratorial environments. While these stories are certainly parochial in the contained worlds they present, they differ from Chandler's novels where the local has become fragmented from a national imaginary: "The action of Chandler's books takes place inside the microcosm, in the darkness of a local world without benefit of the federal Constitution, as in a world without God" (Jameson, 2016: 10). There is also a distinctive difference in the way Dick incorporates crime into his early fiction. Of all Dick's sf stories, there is no starker juxtaposition to the hard-boiled depiction of detection and crime than in 'Minority Report'. In this story from the mid-1950s, crime has practically ceased to exist, not because the world is a substantially better place than our own, but because the police force possesses the technology to prevent crimes before they happen. What is more, the police force is a private company – "Precrime" – set up by the story's protagonist John A. Anderton, who represents

both company man and company; the kind of big-wig who is viewed cynically in the hard-boiled genre. This conveys a distinct shift from the scientist as lone inventor, as recalled nostalgically in Dwight Eisenhower's farewell speech, depicting instead the enmeshing of scientific research in a larger complex of national security and capital.

Luckhurst identifies these new social-economic relations as emanating from the Manhattan Project: "The Manhattan Engineer District was a formative *complex*: a project binding together university laboratories, theoretical physicists, the Army Corps of Engineers and the private companies of Du Pont, Westinghouse, Standard Oil and others" (2005: 82; emphasis in original). This recalls the post-war assimilation of German assets into the American state and private companies discussed in the previous chapter. These spidery networks of information and capital, whose personnel move freely back and forth between public and private sectors, consolidate power in the hands of a select few, undergird disorienting post-war social structures. In 'Minority Report', these relations are portrayed as inherently conspiratorial, with tensions between a hawkish military and a new technologically advanced private police company spilling over into clandestine activities. Anderton is framed by the military as a prospective murderer, but he is unable to work this out before suspecting his understudy and his wife, seeking assistance from an army informer in his organisation, and hiding out with the help of a shady government agency that turns out to be in the service of the military. What is important here is that the paranoid relations caused by this conspiracy unseat Anderton from his position; he becomes detached from his allocated role in the social order. The anxiety expressed in this uncertainty and lack of fixity brings together the paranoid politicking of McCarthyism with the increasingly murky interests and organisations of state and capital. What is anachronistic here is not the hard-boiled detective anchored by a moral code or sense of honour, but the hostile relations between the military, the private company, and central government. The power struggles between these organisations, which recur throughout Dick's writing, have the effect of rendering these antagonisms as an estranged form of connectivity through their conspiratorial conjunctions.

In ‘Minority Report’, changes in post-war economic and social structures create linkages between paranoid Cold War politics and the organisation of capital. These, in turn, produce environments in which appearances are increasingly called into question. Furthermore, the nexuses of power that emerge from the secretive networks of the Manhattan Project require the application of new interpretive tools and cartographic methods. Therefore, while the figure of the gumshoe fades away in the 1950s, his later convocation is inevitable given his central role in the American imaginary as he who can decode and map the city. As the suburbs swallow up the urban peripheries and the city loses its centrality, so the stability of the Suassurean sign and the substantiality of the historical referent are destabilised by new means of production and superstructural organisation that foreground the reproduced image and media spectacle. However, as we shall see, the detective that returns is no valiant saviour, nor keen sleuth able to create a coherent whole from the mess of puzzle pieces these conditions present. With this in mind, there are still some blanks to be filled in before examining *Do Androids?* What is required now is a brief examination of how Dick responds to the interpretative gaps that begin to open in the social atomization of 1960s.

Time Out is Dick’s first fully-fledged depiction of the historical present as a nostalgic reproduction. The 1959 novel is set in 1997. Ragle Gumm is a man with a crucial role in the war taking place between Earth and dissident colonists on the Moon. Gumm’s special talent is an ability to predict the trajectories of missile strikes launched at Earth, thus enabling Earth’s military to intercept them. But this information is unknown to both Gumm and the reader for the majority of the novel, which is not embroiled in the high action of interplanetary warfare, but the humdrum of 1950s suburbia. As it transpires, Gumm has suffered a mental breakdown due to his role in the war effort. One of the side effects of this is juvenile regression. Therefore, to keep exploiting his psychic talent, the Earth powers have placed him in a model 1950s suburb akin to the one he remembers from childhood. Unbeknownst to him, his missile predictions are registered via a newspaper competition that he plays regularly called, “Where-Will-the-little-Green-Man-Be-Next?” But despite

the great financial expense lavished on preserving this façade, artefacts from the outside world start showing up, and with some help from Luna agents, Gumm's memory begins to return.

Jameson argues that Gumm's constructed world conveys "nostalgia for the present": an historical mock-up constructed from mass-cultural detritus: "President Eisenhower's stroke; Main Street, U.S.A.; Marilyn Monroe; a world of neighbors and PTA's; small retail chain stores (the produce trucked in from outside); favorite television programs; mild flirtations with the housewife next door; game shows and contests; sputniks distantly revolving overhead, mere blinking lights in the firmament, hard to distinguish from airliners or flying saucers" (1991: 379). This 1950s is more than just a collage of stereotypes, rather it constitutes "a thing we can build, just as the science fiction writer builds his own small-scale model" (Jameson, 1991: 285). This, Jameson continues, converts reification from a pejorative by-product of capital "to the side of human energies and human possibilities" (1991: 285). Thus what we experience in *Time Out* is an intriguing process whereby Gumm's untangling of the central conspiracy against him pluralises reality. This "solution" to the mystery is striking. For the reader, the 1950s construct cannot be made more "unreal," in the sense that even before we start to suspect that all is not right with Gumm's reality, the small town is already an assemblage of mass-cultural stereotypes. Therefore, its constitution as a prison of "collective wish fulfilment," where the cabbage stink of naturalism is conveyed in the "misery of happiness" emanating from "the gratification of the new car, the TV dinner and your favorite program on the sofa" (1991:283, 280), creates a double exposure. In the hegemonic construction of the 1950s, these empty pleasures are construed as the veritable bounties of capitalist boom times, to be preserved in their own nostalgic reproductions almost as soon as they have happened. But this ossified image is simultaneously a degraded one, unable to support the weight of its own mythologizing. Thus, by turning the present into a reconstruction of the future that is simultaneously an enclosure, the novel's temporal *disjointedness* demystifies the hegemony's use of nostalgia as historical obfuscation. In this respect, Dick's novel performs the curious but inherently useful task of historicising the ideology of nostalgia.

Time Out is a pivotal text in Dick's canon, and notably one that incorporates aspects of detection in a way that combines the conspiratorial structure seen in 'Minority Report' with a trail of clues and artefacts typically associated with both hard-boiled and armchair detective fiction. Moreover, it is significant in the fact that it uses the estrangements of sf to break the deadlock of the mainstream novels. In the latter, reification becomes a perspectival cul-de-sac which dizzies and frustrates, but also perpetuates social realism's own generic limitations in confronting reality. In *Time Out*, however, the sf elements enable Dick to turn his former realist settings into reproductions on which to stage investigations at the blurred edges of nostalgia, history, and reality. Here, as Jameson argues, reification "is diffused and recuperated as a form of praxis" (1991: 285) by applying it as a critical perspective through which to approach hyperreality – presenting us with a paradox whereby the "fake" world gives us something inherently more real than any "realistic" one. Thus, what is staged in *Time Out* is what Jacques Lacan calls *Les non-dupes errant* (Those in the know are in error): the idea that the cynic who believes only his eyes, fails to observe the symbolic fiction that structures our reality (Žižek, 2006: 33). *Time Out*'s method of social critique gives us something to build on, a means of interpreting an ideologically constructed reality and, to some degree, off-setting its empiricism by laying bare its mystifications. But if there is a tentative optimism in the methods this novel sets out, it is an optimism that ebbs in the increasingly murky waters of the 1960s. We have seen something of this already in the ambiguity of *Martian Time-Slip*, which is startlingly brilliant as a schematic of reality, but is far more tentative about what this knowledge can achieve.

In *Martian Time-Slip*, Arnie Kott ruminates that Mars "was a sort of Humpy Dumpty; the original state had been one of perfection, and they and their property had all fallen from that state into rusty bits and useless debris" (1964: 75). The fallen world that Arnie surveys lies in a broken state, but this fall, he falsely believes, can be returned to state of wholeness if the correct methods are applied. As we have seen, these methods are bound to an anachronistic sense of manifest destiny, which he conflates with a paradoxical formulation of newness: the return of an expansive frontier capitalism that never really existed. Notably, what we see in Arnie's excursion into the

Martian wilderness to locate the Martian relic capable of reversing time is the search for a key or master code that will standardise a reality that has become horribly contradictory. While Arnie's actions are inherently cynical, they reflect concerns that preoccupy Dick's writing during this period. Indeed, what becomes evident in Dick's writing in the early 1960s is the absence of a stable referent; this loss, in turn, forms the basis for investigations and quests for something that can stand in for epistemological objectivity.

Dick's early-1960s novel *High Castle* ranks amongst his most interesting, as well as his most popular. What is important to our discussion here is the fact that its narrative construction is predicated upon three branching quests for truth. The first concerns a craftsman, Frank Frink. Frank is a skilled labourer who works at a factory that produces fake Americana for the upper-class Japanese occupiers, but he has ambitions and talent as a jeweller, producing original art pieces that differ significantly from the mass-cultural knock-offs he churns out in his day job. The second plotline concerns Nobosuke Tagomi, a high-ranking Japanese official at the San Francisco Trade Mission. Tagomi, despite his rank and diplomatic ties with the Nazis, is set against the latter's insatiable quest for dominance, which can only be satisfied by total destruction. Tagomi's conspiratorial manoeuvrings against the Nazis sets him down the path of moral conscience where first he balks at the cultural difference presented by the Nazis, and finally kills two SD intelligence officers to save the life of a spy working for the Japanese. The novel's final quest for truth centres on Juliana, Frank's estranged wife, who lives in the neutral zone in the Mid-West, sandwiched between the Imperial Japanese on the West Coast and the Nazis on the East. Juliana's story traces her search for the mysterious Man in the High Castle, the author of the subversive novel *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, which depicts a world the inverse of her own: one in which the Allies won the Second World War.

The three focal characters are connected in numerous ways. There are the obvious literal connections: Juliana and Frank are married; Tagomi comes into possession of one of Frank's curious art pieces; and Tagomi prevents Frank, who is a Jew, from being extradited by the Nazis. Then there are the plot devices and textual artefacts that bind these characters: the Nazi plot to launch a nuclear

strike on Japan puts them all in jeopardy; the *Grasshopper* pervades the text as inspiration for Juliana, annoyance for the Nazis, and a general watercooler subject amongst the novel's social strata; finally, the *I Ching*, which is used extensively by both the Japanese and those under their rule, is referred to continuously, its readings informing the actions and perceptions of the novel's central characters.

The intrigue and simultaneous frustration of *High Castle* lies in how satisfactorily these connections are in formulating a political critique or if, as some have argued, the novel's textual play ultimately refuses this ethical dimension altogether. The most convincing account of the latter is John Rieder's essay 'The Metafictive World of *The Man in the High Castle*', in which Rieder argues that the contingency of Dick's hermeneutics ultimately kicks the chair from under his ethical concerns, leaving only a political ideology of pessimism that "radicalizes liberal individualism into anarchistic individualism" (Rieder in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al, 1992: 231). Thus Tagomi's heroic but violent act of resistance enables him "to retain his humanity against the pressure of the dominant political and social versions of reality," but is ultimately "chilled by the shadow of impotence" (1992: 231) when this act leaves him isolated and facing the possibility of an alternative world where he is the racially oppressed rather than the colonial oppressor. Juliana, on the other hand, finds the Man in the High Castle, only for him to tell her that he has used the *I Ching* to write the *Grasshopper*, or, rather, it has written the novel through him. Asking the *I Ching* why it wrote the book, it gives her the reading "Inner Truth," which appears only to upend the ethical basis of truth through textual ambiguity. Finally, Frank's attempt to forge a new truth through his abstract art pieces blurs the line between high-modernist political resistance and entrepreneurialism, his close call with the authority leading to a final ambiguous resolution: "Pick up where I left off, making the jewellery, using my hands. Working and not thinking, not looking up or trying to understand. I must keep busy. I must turn the pieces out" (Dick, 1962: 232). For Rieder, despite the novel's intricacy, nothing is resolved, nothing is solved, and the only ethical model that remains at the novel's end is

"an apolitical collectivity, without center or goal" (Rieder in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al, 1992: 231).

While I do not wholly agree with Rieder's reading, I do sympathise with his frustrations. What Dick gives us are the startling effects, the skeletal structures of late capitalism, and the need to struggle against it at all cost. Where he is less forthcoming is with schema for political resistance or blueprints for a better future. In respect to the latter, he is a pessimist, at best he is worryingly abstract, bordering on anti-intellectual. My objection to Rieder is rooted in his argument that, for Dick, political resistance ultimately leads to an act of (violent) contradiction that brings about only other forms of oppression. Ultimately, actions like Tagomi's must be weighed against the proposed reality that will replace that of the hegemony. Where Rieder is right is that the contingency imposed on reality through the text's complex of hermeneutic strategies always defers the authority of an alternative. In this respect, we are to perceive Dick's critical perspective as one that considers political change only in respect to who the masters are. However, if *High Castle* does chart the shift from the optimism of political resistance to the pessimism of what it can achieve, what it foregrounds instead is that a new political reality can only emerge from interpretative struggle. Without bourgeois morality, with only the contingency of texts, and with the ebbing of the historical referent, how do we create modes of interpretation from which political action can proceed? This is the inherently moral question that the story raises. If it has nothing tangible to replace its lost interpretative object with – which is a lost political objectivity – what it offers instead is an investigation of the terms on which a new reality can be built. Thus the "Inner Truth" revealed to Julia is, I propose, a tentative hope in the demystification of (re)reading. The truth of *High Castle* is not to embroil us in obfuscating textuality, but to drive us back inside the machinery of reality's ideological construction: the *investigation* of reality becomes new, albeit unstable, political ground.

Until this point, my objective has been to map out the various ways in which Dick approaches detection, conspiracy, and mystery in his work leading up to *Do Androids?* Having put this

groundwork in place, I want to begin by looking at the latter's protagonist, the Dickian detective *par excellence*, Rick Deckard. Deckard is certainly the kind of name one would associate with a hard-boiled detective; it has the ring of a Marlowe, an Archer, a Hammer, as well as being, as Lejla Kucukalic observes, a homonym of Descartes (2009: 74). But if Hammett's Op and Spade abide by a code and Chandler's Marlowe by honour, then Deckard negates both. Rather than these moral anchorages, Deckard is best understood as someone who is bound to the dual nature of the commodity. He is, to invert a line from Chandler's famous essay 'The Simple Art of Murder', both tarnished and afraid; the cause of his anguish is money and what he does to earn it. Not quite a cop, nor a private eye, Deckard works for the San Francisco Police Department as a bounty hunter, "retiring" (killing) androids for pay. The anachronistic nature of Dick's detective reminds us that Deckard's historical-generic heritage is not only the hardboiled pulps, but also the Western: he is a lone gunman bureaucrat, a cowboy in a suit. However, unlike the romantic ideal of the rugged male individual embodied in the hardboiled detective or the lone ranger, Deckard's alienation is not a matter of personal choice but a direct result of his social surroundings and his blinkered bourgeois perspective.

There is no question, however, that what Deckard does for a living is well within the law: androids ("andys") work on the colonies as labourers and any escapees who make it back to Earth are fair game for the authorities. The slavery analogy here is by no means accidental. At the beginning of the novel, the android is described as "the mobile donkey of the colonization program" (Dick, 1968: 13), they are further compared in their variety to 1960s automobiles, and, to seal the deal, Dick plants an advert that makes direct reference to the Antebellum South. While the analogy is lain on thick, it is an effective and evocative estrangement, recalling the highly capitalistic system of slavery adopted in the South, which reduced human beings to machines in the service of capital.[13] Yet Deckard's job is not to return escaped androids to their owners, but, in starker terms, to

[13] While there is not time to do it justice here, Dick's early 1960s novels are fascinating in their engagement with the American Civil War, 1961-1965 being its centenary years. It remains one of those odd, unexplored, but patently rich arrears of Dick's writing that remains to be investigated in depth.

exterminate them before they can endanger human lives. Thus the question that haunts him, which is weaved through the text as a whole, is one of the two major philosophical ideas Dick identifies in his work: “What constitutes the authentic human being?” (Dick in Sutin, 1995: 260) For Dick, what begins as a biological-technological distinction on the surface of perception is a binary that breaks down, splinters, and morphs into confusing new forms on closer inspection. “Perhaps,” Dick contemplates in the essay ‘The Android and the Human’, “really, what we are seeing is a gradual merging of the general nature of human activity and function into the activity and function of what we humans have built and surround[ed] ourselves with” (Dick in Sutin, 1995 [1972]: 184). And, if so, what we call androids “do not mimic humans; they are, in many deep ways, *actually* human already” (1995: 185; emphasis in original). Thus what makes us human is not merely a question of how or from what we are made, but ethically how we comprehend reality. Therefore, an android constructed in a lab can yearn for those highest of human qualities – in *Do Androids?* the rogue androids desire empathic connection which is denied to them by their programming – while an isolated human being attuned only to insect habits of work and consumption constitutes a reflex machine: "analogues of machines in the *bad* sense, in the sense that although biological life continues, metabolism goes on, the soul – for lack of a better term – is no longer there or is at least no longer active” (Dick in Sutin, 1995: 187; emphasis in original).

Deckard occupies a dangerous position in relation to these Janus-faced definitions of human and android. He believes that meaning can be injected into his humdrum life, which is marred by a miserable marriage and a general sense of underachievement, if he can just make enough money to purchase an authentic animal. The latter constitutes the novel’s second remarkable novum: after the fallout of nuclear war (“World War Terminus”) has poisoned the planet with radioactive dust, animals, most of which have been made extinct, are Earth’s most fetishized commodities. The only problem is that just as the world of *Do Androids?* is populated by artificial human workers, so its pet stores are filled with electric animals for those who do not want to lose face with their neighbours, but who cannot afford the hefty fee for a real animal. Deckard is precisely one of these unfortunates.

Yet he is not a poor man, more down on his luck. It is revealed that he once owned an authentic animal of his own – a sheep – which died of tetanus; its memory constitutes a gap in his life and draws him into an icy depression, which he attempts to keep at bay through his work. In this respect, what shackles Deckard is not poverty, but rather his own aspirational nature through which his mourning for a lost love object is sublimated. Again, the compulsion to work and the specific kind of work that Deckard does raises questions about "human" activity. It is no accident that the novel is set over the course of a single day, at the beginning of which Deckard is presented with the opportunity to retire six rogue androids – the latest Nexus-6 model. The bounty for each android is a thousand dollars, which will give him enough money to buy a new authentic sheep, plus change, enabling him to get rid of his despised electric animal, whose malfunctioning circuitry burns away at his middle-class pride. But this task is also the staging of a kind of white-collar death drive, where the myopic pursuit of the commodity across the desolate surface of the working day not only threatens personal ruin, but precipitates an entropic effect across both material and psychic landscapes.

While the generic signifiers of *Do Androids?* point towards the hard-boiled – the weary cop/killer, the degraded city, android femme fatales, and Deckard's trusty old .38 – the role that Deckard fulfils also recalls an older, typically European, style of detection, which is concerned with the restoration of a bourgeois order rather than mapping the American landscape. The mystery built around the classic sleuth, who operates from the comfort of their armchair, usually in a contained environment among the upper-classes (August Dupin and Sherlock Holmes are the prototypes, but they are far more mobile than their calcified descendants in the work of Agatha Christie, Margaret Sayers, and Michael Innes), conveys the notion that, as Jameson puts it, "the real function of the murder in the quiet village is for order to be felt more strongly" (2016: 5). This role is clearly evident in Deckard, although he achieves his ends through violence rather than deduction. Despite the difference in methods, however, by upholding the law, Deckard moves closer to mending the wound opened by his lost sheep, whose healing will strengthen the consumerist ideology underpinning his world. Yet the classic sleuth only succeeds in maintaining the status quo at the expense of their social

grounding: “To secure society, the detective sacrificed his own position within the bourgeoisie, within the system. That allowed the detective to *contain* the crime, but only at a cost […] as he becomes a homeless outsider who ostensibly ‘does not really *exist* when he is not on the case’” (Swope, 1998: 211; emphasis in original). Deckard, too, gives up part of himself to maintain the reality of the hegemony. In *Do Androids?*, the latter is particularly nostalgic, where the purchasing of a new authentic sheep exemplifies the desire to reclaim lost time, thus superimposing a model 1950s of the variety that imprisons Gumm in *Time Out*. But for Deckard to uphold the social order, he performs what appears to be a contradictory task: he destroys private property. However, on closer inspection this analysis overlooks the fact that the rogue androids Deckard retires no longer constitute commodities, as their new-found sentience strips them of their intended use-value. Therefore, by retiring these androids, Deckard ensures that they upset neither class relations, nor the perceived ontological stability of human society, while perpetuating the androidization of human life by preserving the fetishized status of the authentic consumer object enshrined in Earth’s few remaining animals.

What we have learnt about Deckard and the philosophical premise of the novel, so far, is that the explicit application of detection to a sf setting exposes fundamental ontological questions that arise in highly technologized advanced capitalist societies. Thus *Do Androids?* takes the notion of philosophical investigation quite literally, bringing in a detective/hunter/killer to root out the answers that can help us to successfully navigate capitalist reality. However, Dick knows full well that the conventional detective is compromised from the start. What he presents us with in Deckard is both anachronism and a kind of mutant: not a proper cop, nor a private eye, nor quite a sub-contracted gun for hire. Correcting one character, Deckard states, “‘I’m not a peace officer […] I’m a bounty hunter’” (Dick, 1968: 39), while his wife’s admonitions frame his liminality in starker terms: “‘You’re a murderer hired by the cops’” (1968: 1). Indeed, his morally repugnant job, which holds together the fragile bonds of society, makes him more like a garbage man with a gun, a comparison that the novel draws when Deckard’s investigations lead him to the lavish office of the Bay Area

Scavengers Company: “The deep-pile carpets, the expensive genuine wood desks, reminded him that garbage collecting and trash disposal had, since the war, become one of Earth’s important industries. The entire planet had begun to disintegrate into junk, and to keep the planet habitable for the remaining population the junk had to be hauled away occasionally” (Dick, 1968: 75). If Deckard is himself a profiteer of this entropic junk-scape, the loose ends that he is tasked with tying up have notable generic implications. The pejorative analysis of the pulps and “genre fiction” more generally – which are types of “trash” in themselves – is levelled at their formal or *formulaic* constraints. When framed in this way, formula constitutes the repetition of machine reproduction translated as cultural material. Thus Michael Holquist argues that the formulaic nature of genre provides us with unthreatening “kitsch” objects, these being removed from “art” and standing in opposition to the challenging experimentation of the avant-garde:

> Even if you assume that art is therapeutic, you must first experience the pity and terror of tragedy before winning the catharsis it may then provide. Such unsettling emotions are precisely what kitsch operates against in its urge to avoid all difficulties, whether of perception, execution, or reception. It gives no pain, but bromides, not deep questions, but easy answers. (1971: 137)

While Holquist’s position is biased towards the avant-garde as means of radically transforming mass-cultural material, his conception of genre sheds some light on Dick’s detective. Deckard parodies the classic detective as pacifier, brutally eradicating interpretative potentiality through the officialdom of the law, thus keeping us safe from difficult questions about ourselves, the society we live in, and art itself. In this respect, we see a different violence to that which Holquist pronounces as the ability of art to shock and provoke. Instead, Deckard’s bounty hunting enforces a repressive reality which is not just dubiously authoritarian, but is grounded in an ideological feedback loop in its nostalgia for the 1950s as a golden age of American capitalism.

Deckard's worldview places him in a position where he resembles the android cogito in the worst possible sense. Halfway through the novel, John Isidore, the novel's secondary protagonist, whose storyline runs adjacent to Deckard's, meeting only at the novel's violent end, has a vision of the bounty hunter: "something merciless that carried a printed list and a gun, that moved machine-like through the flat, bureaucratic job of killing" (Dick, 1968: 138). Yet this sinister caricature arrives at a point where Deckard is having revelations of his own, as a result of teaming up with Phil Resch. Resch is another bounty hunter who, unbeknownst to him, has been working at a fake police precinct set up by the androids. While he helps Deckard retire two of his bounties, Deckard is convinced that Resch is an android implanted with false memories. To the former's dismay, however, Resch passes the empathy test used to distinguish androids from humans; Resch really is human, but has no empathy for androids: he is the perfect bounty hunter – the terrifying model of human as android.

The crisis invoked in this scene is compounded by the juxtaposition of Resch to the opera singer android Luba Luft, the second of the two androids he and Deckard retire. Deckard admires Luft, not just because she performs the function of a great singer – like a radio or a record player – but because she conveys an abstract sense of the human: "it wasn't the talent, he told himself; it was she herself"; "Luba Luft had seemed *genuinely* alive; it had not worn the aspect of a simulation" (1968: 119, 122; emphasis in original)**.** But the combination of retiring Luft and discovering Resch is human exposes Deckard to a metaphoric slippage which destabilises his sense of being. Up until this moment, he reflects, he "had never felt any empathy on his own part toward the androids he killed" (1968: 122); now he is forced to contemplate the contradictions implicit in the human-android relation. Therefore, as morally important as this discovery is for him, this knowledge places him in an untenable situation. His job, whose function is similar to that of Jack Bohlen in *Martian Time-Slip*, is to maintain the machinery of a reality whose own contradictions perpetuate the conditions of a societal schizoid effect. The "solution" that presents itself to him is to give up this life, to step outside his assumed identity. But his panicked thoughts of how to do this are particularly revealing: he will become an insurance underwriter, a degraded fantasy derived from the alias used by the first

android he and Resch retire. Therefore, what Deckard proposes here does not work towards a partial solution, but undergirds his bad faith. He is, as Isidore perceives in the passage above, already a type of bureaucrat; not the glamorous G-man that Herbert Hoover once promoted, but a white collar worker carrying out mundane administrative duties.

We have reached a point where it is clear that if the Dickian detective is not doomed from the start, he corresponds to that which Patricia Merivale and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney call "the defeated sleuth" (1999: 8). Merivale and Sweeney situate the latter as the protagonist of the "metaphysical detective story": "a text that parodies or subverts traditional detective-story conventions – such as narrative closure and the detective's role as surrogate reader – with the intention, or at least the effect, of asking questions about mysteries of being and knowing which transcend the mere machinations of the mystery plot" (1999: 2). At a glance, there is much here that tallies with the feats of detection on show in *Do Androids?* The further Deckard pursues his bounty, the more his own ontological moorings are severed and the further the world descends into entropic "kipple" (one of Dick's brilliant neologisms, used in the novel to describe the build-up of material detritus engulfing Earth civilization). However, while *Do Androids?* may reflect "the absence, falseness, circularity, or self-defeating nature of any kind of closure to the investigation" (1999: 8) that Merivale and Sweeney ascribe to the metaphysical detective story, its function is certainly different to that which we find in Jorge Louis Borges, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Umberto Eco, and Paul Auster, the writers around whom the latter and their peers circle their wagons. With this in mind, I want to end this analysis by examining how in historicising genre, Dick uses detection as a means of decoding some of the mysteries of cultural production.

Let us return to the scene outlined above, in which Deckard yearns for a non-escape from bounty hunting. This doubling down on reification is subjected to an uncanny reproduction in the notorious ending to the original cut of *Blade Runner*, Scott's film adaptation. In the latter, after a climactic showdown with the rogue androids, a battered and bruised Deckard drives out of the city (changed from San Francisco to Los Angeles) with Rachel Rosen, the beguiling android love interest

of both the novel and film. As the camera swoops over a misty country vista, the image begins to flicker and phase into an interior shot of Deckard and Rachel in the car. At this point, a voiceover roles, explaining that Rachel does not have the same inbuilt obsolescence that other androids have: "Tyrell had told me Rachel was special – no termination date. I didn't know how long we had together – who does?" (Scott, 1982). Thus the film's conclusion tritely asserts that after their trials and tribulations, the pair have earned their chance to live happily ever after.

What is particularly interesting here, though, is the voiceover itself and its historical-generic implications. In the classic detective story we are presented with the narrative of the detective's quest and the hidden narrative of the murder, with the latter being reconstructed through the diachronic movement of the former. However, in the hard-boiled detective story this sense of closure is doubled up, as the puzzle-solving aspect of the narrative is deemed to be arbitrary from the start. Therefore, just as we know from the outset that in the classic detective story the detective will solve the crime, in the hard-boiled detective story this is compounded by the fact that it is not really the crime itself that is important, but the narrative space that it opens up. Notably, Jameson posits that this narrative effect construes the use of voiceover in 1930s radio media, "which signals in advance the closure of events to be narrated" (2016: 61). In Chandler, this closure foregrounds the semiotic economy between spaces, objects, and people, establishing the Sartrean notion of life as interesting only in its narrativisation (Jameson, 2016: 62). In *Blade Runner*, however, the effect is much different. Rather than facilitating a rich interpretative economy, the anachronism of the voiceover – which has the last word in a film overburdened with symbolism – restores hermeneutic order through its nostalgic indulgence. What is reinstated is the bourgeois distinction between the corruption of the city and the redeeming nature of the country. In this respect, Deckard and Rachel do not just drive towards their happy ending, but out beyond the limits of a disorienting global capitalism into the narrative frontier of that which we have seen described by Henderson as rural realism.

Yet in *Do Androids?* such escapism is always already dismissed. Indeed, unlike either the classic or the hard-boiled detective story, what Dick presents us with is the sheer unattainability of closure at the level of content. This is injected at the start of the novel by the "merry little surge of electricity" (1968: 1) from the Penfield Mood Organ. On the surface, this device is more akin to radio than television and its estranged double the empathy box (the mass-cultural technology that provides Earth's inhabitants with a squalid sense of connection through a shared religious experience). As its name indicates, the Penfield enables its user to electronically "dial" their mood, bringing it into close proximity with an amalgamation of post-war domestic gadgetry – the radio alarm clock and the microwave, as well as the older, more invasive, presence of the telephone. Notably, its functional nature makes it the inverse of the mystical, suggestive, textual I Ching of *High Castle*. Yet its apparent pragmatism makes it conversely ephemeral. This slippage is exposed at the start of the novel, where Deckard's wife, Iran, reveals that she has begun to use the Penfield to program her own depression. Thus what we see here is the ebbing of the closure invoked by radio voiceover; despite the Penfield's non-visual, programmatic characteristics, it flickers ominously into the synchronicity of televisual effect. Although it is distinctively less hallucinatory in its effects than the religious visions of the empathy box or the Can-D drug in *Palmer Eldritch*, the Penfield still perpetuates a similar kind of anti-hallucinatory inversion where "it is the dreamworld or hallucinatory state which is degraded, and progressively infected by reality itself" (Jameson, 2005: 369). Thus Iran's scheduling in of depression and despair signals that there is something fundamentally dissatisfying with the Penfield's ability to mediate reality. The sense of lack conveyed here, which for Iran is emotional, while for the reader it is representational, is undergirded by the repetitious act of dialling for a mood, whose numbers correspond to those of TV stations. This overdetermined mediation, disassociates signifier and signified, turning the moods into strange standardised units, which function now only as direct extensions of the Penfield.

Here the standardisation imposed by the novum effaces any kind of naturalistic sense of realism that we might carry over into sf. By converting moods and emotions into settings on a

household appliance, the marital wrangling around the Penfield in the novel's opening scene conveys a metafictional discourse on writing as a cultural product. A sf story, like any other, must begin by establishing the mood, but this in itself is overridden by the generic expectation embodied in the materiality of its form. The Penfield is intriguing in this respect as it is a typically generic device whose function exposes the superstructural nature of genre. With this in mind, rather than the epistemological closure interpellated in the classic and hard-boiled detective story, what we get in *Do Androids?* is a material closure, brought about by the fact that mass media, mass communication, and mechanical reproduction have irrevocably commoditized fiction. The inside-outside relation of the literary and the paraliterary can exist no longer, not even in the way that Holquist asserts that the avant-garde can effectively solve the problem of mass culture. In Deckard's narrative, the world starts out as one of binaries, easily distinguishable categories and assailable goals. But, as we have seen, these explode into paradox and contradiction, turning his adventure from an epistemological quest (for money) to an ontological investigation of subjectivity and signification. Metaphors do not hold anymore, but appear to be constantly slipping or flip-flopping, just as the novel jumps back and forth between its elaborate system of double storylines, characters, and motifs. Deckard's (de)feats of detection cannot give us definitive answers, except in the sense that generic production and the cultural apparatus behind it seems always to place us as reader-consumers in a similar position; the dour mystery of reading is that the ideological apparatus imbued in the means of cultural production has, in part, always already done the reading for us. But in the play of doubles, in the empty clutter of chronoscape, in the strange dislocation between the schlocky sf future and the corny hard-boiled past, interpretative gaps open which overrun the story itself – the skeletal body of genre is exposed through is oversaturated skin of narrative. As Deckard is exposed to increasing amounts of informational distortion, like the radiation-soaked San Francisco he wades through, the novel exposes dialectically the dislocation between narrative production and the mass-cultural product.

Given the sense of closure I have just discussed, it is particularly fitting that the novel's ending instils an uncanny circularity. In spite of his absurdly eventful day – whose narrative overload

produces a textual exhaustion akin to the function of kipple – Deckard arrives home, somewhat more dishevelled and disillusioned than when he left that morning, to find Iran still procrastinating over the Penfield. He has with him a toad, which he believes is authentic, but which Iran quickly discovers is a fake. Yet this revelation, which threatens to tilt Deckard into the abyss once and for all, does not quite manage to. Instead, exhausted, he falls asleep, the novel closing on Iran's call to the pet store to secure the necessary supplies and maintenance for their new electric animal. Here we encounter an instance where, "the homely becomes the unhomely," if there was ever such thing in the first place: "No doubt the catch," Palmer adds, "is that the homely never was the homely […] there never was a distinct, autonomous private life, lived from out of its centre" (2003: 97). Here the structure of genre is brought back into the frame once more. The standardised units of the Penfield, which lay bare the irreality of the formulaic genre devices, return as some repressed comprehension that reality is itself inconceivable for any form of art – such that can remain in the an era of Post-Fordism – which does not concede to its own generic formulation. *Do Androids?* takes stock of a world in which the distance between society and culture has closed irrevocably. What means of interpretation that remain can expose the ideological matrices of capitalist reality, but, as in Deckard's final summation of the android, they can enjoy only a paltry life.

Conspiracy

Jameson posits that Chandler occupies a liminal historical position in American literature: he is caught between two historical moments. The first is that of the great period of American literature from between the wars, which "explored and defined America in a geographical mode" (Jameson, 2016: 7). The second is that of the literature that will proceed him: "by an accident of place, his social content anticipates the realities of the fifties and sixties. For Los Angeles is already a kind of microcosm and forecast of the country as a whole: a new centreless city, in which the various classes

have lost touch with each other because each is isolated in its own geographical compartment" (2016: 7). Indeed, we see similar tensions at play in Dick's 1960s novels, where the desire to map American life through its geography is thwarted by a world in which history and symbol have been eroded by post-war capitalism and dis-located by mass media and mass communication technology. Increasingly, in Dick's writing, even the kind of centreless spatiality of Chandler's novels cannot be retrieved, because late capitalism perpetuates a new kind of emptiness through the clutter of loose signifiers and the erasure of private domestic space, which is annexed into multinational capital through the television set, mass surveillance, and the deregulation of the free market.

Do Androids? leaves us on a precipice as far as these concerns go. The condensed San Francisco that we are presented with does not feel like a particularly "global" space – it is still ostensibly the same small town setup left over from the 1950s – and its portrayal of capital still favours the anachronism of the Gilded Age robber baron over the mobility of finance capital. What does feel frighteningly real and, in this sense highly intuitive of the conditions of late capitalism, is the novel's sense of what Jean Baudrillard calls "simulation," which is "characterised by a precession of the model, of all models around the merest fact – the models come first, and their orbital […] circulation constitutes the genuine magnetic field of events" (Baudrillard, 1983: 32; emphasis removed). The standardised generic units that construct Deckard's world, its schlocky materialism and reconstituted pop-psychology, are, in this regard, properly irreal. They are shallow artefacts devoid of substance in any traditional sense, but maintain a kind of half-life existence in their representation of their own reproducibility. Thus a world turns to kipple not because it is simply corrupt or a sham reality, but because cultural production and media spectacle efface the historical referent, making it accessible only as a reproduction.

When Deckard and Resch retire Luft at the art museum, she takes on the ghastly appearance of Edvard Munch's *The Scream* – the painting all three of them have viewed only moments before. In *Postmodernism*, Jameson situates Munch's painting as "a canonical expression of the great modernist thematics of alienation, anomie, solitude, social fragmentation, and isolation" (1991: 11).

Yet in *Do Androids?* this effect has clearly waned; Resch's assessment of the painting, that "'this is how an andy must feel'" (Dick, 1968: 113), rings hollow, given the contested nature of android and human. This symbolic shallowness is compounded when Luft, shortly before she is killed, asks Deckard to buy her a print of Munch's *Puberty*. Strangely, however, the painting that is described in the text does not quite match Munch's, but corresponds instead with Félicien Rops' very similar *Le Plus Bel Amour De Don Juan* (the model's hands are "clasped together" [1968: 114] rather than crossed over, as they are in Munch's painting). Here symbolic value has ebbed from the work, constituting a half-remembered knowledge from an irretrievable past. That Luft takes on the appearance of *The Scream* in her death is particularly disconcerting, not just because it signals android alienation, but because it depicts art as a standardised unit – all the meaning and weight of a canonical work transposed into the figure of an artificial construct "crouched against the wall of the elevator, screaming" (1968: 116).

Yet there remains in *Do Androids*? some stability in the movement between the doubled or refracted units and the gaps they produce. Even the Voigt Kampf empathy test, whose viability is undermined when Deckard almost fails to detect that Rachel is an android, still provides us with some fragile separation between interpretative categories. This, I propose, is because *Do Androids?* foregrounds the adventure or quest in its pastiche of detective fiction, while conspiracy looms in the background as a static entity – like the elliptical clue of the Sidney's animal catalogue that Deckard finds at the Rosen Corporation, which leaves the lingering suspicion that the Rosens are either in on the authentic animal racket or, more sinisterly, that there are no real animals remaining. However, as we shall see in Dick's later novel *Scanner*, it is conspiracy as *theory* that supplants the movement of the detective through the city. Indeed, in *Scanner* we move beyond the questionable reliability of empathy tests to police agents who literally blur into the background, and who operate simultaneously as law enforcer and criminal. In its ubiquitous landscape of strip malls, 7-Eleven's, and fast food chains, commodities are vacuous non-entities, identifiable only by brand name. Trying to perceive how these intangible, self-contained, but somehow reproducible things have come into

being becomes the fundamental structure of reality. This ebbing of tangibility – of causal and material certainty – allows mystification to run rampant. No longer is navigating your day-to-day life a question of knowledge, but of coming up with viable theories for a mundane reality saturated with cyphers. Here, as one character remarks, "one needs a theory for everything" (Dick, 1977: 16).

Dick started work on *Scanner* in the early 1970s, shortly after a three-week stint in a Vancouver rehabilitation clinic following a failed suicide attempt. Dick's accounts of how he ended up there are typically conflicting. Sutin cites an interview in *Vertex* magazine, in which Dick claims to have method-acted his way into the clinic by posing as a heroin addict, but the story seems unlikely: "Trained experts taking Phil for a junkie? Heroin was one drug Phil never did mess with" (Sutin, 2006: 192). Yet regardless of its authenticity, this version of events finds its way into *Scanner*. Not unlike Dick, the novel's protagonist, Bob Arctor, attempts to infiltrate a rehab clinic to try and locate a fugitive drug runner. While he fails to gain access, he does manage to convince the staff that he is a junkie. Whether Dick saw this as a way of confronting discrepancies in narrating his own life is uncertain, but it confirms that he perceived fiction as a way of connecting disparate and conflicting narratives in a larger structure of reality, in which the stories we tell ourselves are prone to reproduction in a mass-cultural form and vice versa.

In a *k-punk* blog post titled 'Mors Ontologica', Fisher describes *Scanner* as "one of Dick's bleakest novels, and almost certainly his saddest" (2006). Given Dick's consistently depressing repertoire, it is a claim worth taking notice of. The credence of Fisher's statement derives from *Scanner*'s near-unrivalled ability to capture the transitional nature of the end of the 1970s, where the energy of the counterculture has become an icy memory ingrained in its psychic burnout, where the spectacle of government corruption confirms state secrecy as a mundane pseudo-event, and the holographic spectre of neoliberalism has begun to reprogram the coordinates of Western capitalism. This is supported in Palmer's analysis, in which he claims that *Scanner* "offers the most thorough conspectus of the nature of postmodern society" (2003: 177). My investigation of *Scanner* builds on the groundwork lain by Fisher and Palmer by examining how through the conspiracy genre, Dick

provides us with a critical analysis – in three-dimensional holographic playback form – of an emergent neoliberal society and postmodern culture.

As I have mentioned already, the story itself focuses on Bob Arctor. Notably, *Scanner* does not use the structure of multiple narrative perspectives – Dick's polyphonic narratives had already begun to wane by the mid-1960s, as evinced in the spectacular *Ubik*. Yet what is notable here is that Arctor is not a fixed node like Bohlen or Deckard, but a fragmented subject. While Deckard's name is homonymous with Descartes, invoking the latter's "I" cogito, Arctor's is only a letter away from "actor," a semiotic distortion that both the novel and, to a lesser extent, Arctor are aware. Like Deckard, though, this instability relates to Arctor's job: he is an undercover narcotics agent, referred to by his superiors as Agent Fred. Arctor, therefore, is a role, but one that has worryingly more substance than his police mononym.

Fred is presented as a series of surfaces rather than an entity with any real depth. When he reports to his boss, he assumes a "measured uninvolved attitude" (Dick, 1977: 43) that corresponds with Deckard as the cold bureaucratic killer. Fred's inhuman neutrality is further compounded through the function of the novel's only real sf innovation: the scramble suit. This piece of tech is a kind of membranous bodysuit that generates constantly shifting composite images from its databanks, making the wearer look human at a glance, but impossible to define. Thus, at the beginning of the novel, Fred is referred to as "'the vague blur'" (1977: 16). These suits, the novel explains, are issued to police agents in order to protect their identities from criminal elements that have infiltrated the police. The effect, though, is to empty out the body of the wearer by turning its surface into a set of moving pictures.

Unsettlingly, Arctor has comparatively greater "depth" of character. He has a backstory, although it rings hollow, precisely like something learnt as writ to the point that it has begun to stand in as the truth: "In former days Bob Arctor had run his affairs differently: there had been a wife much like other wives, his two small daughters, a stable household that got swept and cleaned and emptied out daily" (1977: 48). The sketch is so generic that it could be an outline for one of the stock

1950s families that Dick uses in his earlier stories; indeed, these details are eventually debunked by Fred's boss, Hank. What is worrying, though, is Arctor's paper-thin fiction of a past life is about as close as we get to "substance" in the realist sense. The obvious contention here is that Arctor should of course seem phony, because he is a character being played by Fred. But in *Scanner* this kind of surface-model simply does not apply. There is, paradoxically, too much distinction, too much inconsistency between Fred and Arctor to simply say that one is the construct of the other. Instead, they constitute multiple personae in the flimsiest sense; they cannot constitute a coherent whole, neither combined nor on their own, rather they present a kind of synchronic field, where both exist in contradiction to the other as the overlapping holographic images of a shallow motif. This puts us significantly beyond the standardised generic units that we encounter in *Do Androids?*, placing us in a position where the representativeness of language has begun to constitute something eerily like the scramble suit.

While *Do Androids?* charts Deckard's descent into moral ambiguity and paltry rebirth, the position in which we first find Arctor is already one of ontological instability. Here we are beyond the vestiges of morality that are offered in *Do Androids?* – Fred is a disillusioned cop, who feels as much disdain for "straight" society as he does for the doper community he has penetrated. The story follows Fred-Arctor as they carry out their investigative work while trying to maintain some kind of objective separation between their legitimate role as a cop and undercover alias as a drug dealer. This, however, is hampered severely by the fact that Arctor is addicted to the drugs he is selling. Substance Death (Substance D), the novel's fictional narcotic, is the quintessential postmodern non-experience: it has no hallucinogenic properties, nor does it provide any real buzz, instead its effects are only negative; it is highly addictive, but utterly devoid of substance, and sustained use causes cognitive slippages and permanent brain damage. "'[T]here is only the one trip,'" Arctor's conniving housemate Jim Barris contemplates, "'all heavy. Heavy that leads to the grave'" (1977: 79). This remark denotes the trajectory of the novel, which charts the slow entropic decline of its various drug users into irreparable brain damage; the Substance D user does not "find death in the sense of an

ending, but reach[es] a stalled cessation of time and experience" (Palmer, 2003: 177). This, then, is not death in the biological sense, but solipsism.

Although there is not much in the way of action, *Scanner* creates its intrigue through the paranoid relations of its conspiratorial-detective framework. Arctor is trying to work his way up through the hierarchy of narcotics distribution, buying increasing amounts of Substance D from his supplier-girlfriend Donna Hawthorne: "This way he could travel up the ladder and come to the next person in line, become a dealer like her, and then later on maybe get another step up and another as the quantities he bought grew" (1977: 23). Here we have the fatal causal strategy that dooms the metaphysical detective to the untold complexities of life outside the rigid genre constraints of the classic detective story. The problem that Fred soon encounters is that his superiors, who do not know he is Arctor, make the latter the focus of their investigation. Arctor is, Fred's boss states, "'Covertly funded, covertly engaged'" (1977: 45), which of course is true. At this point, Arctor's house is bugged with a sophisticated system of three dimensional scanners and audio devices. What is more, Fred must now use this monitoring system to keep tabs on himself as Arctor, while Arctor, with a little help from his equally unstable housemates, Barris and Ernie Luckman, becomes more and more paranoid.

The novel's final twist reveals the whole setup as a ruse to get Fred-Arctor into a rehab clinic, which the police believe to be a front for the manufacture of Substance D. His ambiguous assignment, itself a fake, is a way for his handlers to implant subliminal messaging that might remain in the charred circuitry of his mind once he has penetrated the clinic. He is, supposedly, a sacrifice for the greater good – a means of restoring order.

As the synopsis above shows, *Scanner* gives us a lot to digest. What I want to focus on in the following analysis are two distinctive narrative techniques that Dick uses to map the emergent postmodern landscape. These I call *cutting* and *un-depth*, which refer respectively to a process of editing or splicing as a way of constructing narrative and to the metonymic one-dimensionality of

objects in a hyperreal consumer society. Before broaching these concepts, however, I want to provide some further context to the nature of conspiracy and its relation to neoliberalism and postmodernism. We have seen that in Dick's writing paranoia is a central feature; as Melley observes, it is a "problem [that] has underwritten virtually the entire corpus of […] Dick's science fiction" (2000: 18). And we have seen also that conspiracy is one of the key structures that governs Dick's writing, from 'Minority Report' to *Do Androids?* Yet conspiracy *theory* as it appears in *Scanner* is, as I will explain, different from its more rigid application in these earlier texts.

Melley observes that "the nature of paranoid politics is different after World War II, focused on domestic rather than foreign threats and especially concerned about 'the effects of the mass media'" (2000: 2). However, by the time we get to the mid-1970s, conspiracy has begun to reflect the conditions of an increasingly decentralised multinational capitalism and, in regards to Watergate, contemplate the very nature of secrecy and scandal themselves. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), David Harvey documents the efforts of capital throughout the 1970s to widen divisions of class through applied neoliberal economics. Harvey's much-cited definition of neoliberalism is worth recalling here, as it provides a useful touchstone for our understanding of conspiracy as a representational framework closely tied to neoliberal practices: "Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade" (2005: 2). These "freedoms" are equivocal to the increasing deregulation of the market, the dismantling of social institutions, and the decentralisation of services. What is paradoxical about this model is that these structural changes facilitate an ideological emphasis on the individual and, in the market, competition, while simultaneously enabling those already controlling the majority of the world's wealth to further monopolise the means of production. A further effect of this, which is of great importance to us here, given that detection constitutes a form of mapping, is that as capital becomes more mobile, its monopolisation imposes greater social and cultural stasis. In this respect, the way

we are inclined to contemplate the world under neoliberalism is inherently more spatial and relational, rather than temporal and causal.

These changes in the way that capital functions, how we perceive these functions, and the kind of reality produced from these new linkages and mystifications create new interpretative imperatives and difficulties. This leads Freedman to posit that "conspiracy is no voluntaristic aberration but a structural necessity for ruling-class politics" (1984: 19). What he means by this is that under neoliberalism, the relation between an organisation's appearance or brand and its material practices become increasingly contradictory. Whether we are talking about a global corporation, a bank, a government, or a military – which, since Lenin's conceptualisation of "imperialism," have become ever more integrated – they are all subject to some degree of public accountability, as meagre as this often is. Therefore, under the conditions of liberal democracy, such an organisation or institution cannot be seen to act in a way that the hegemony considers despotic; it is, therefore, presented with two choices: "It can curtail the enforcement of its perceived interests out of prudence or (ethical) respect for republican parliamentarianism; or it can adopt conspiratorial methods" (1984: 191). What this depicts is that a fundamental condition of contemporary capitalism is that it must convince us that it is ethical while doing wholly unethical things.

However, Freedman's formulation requires some further elaboration, as what he presents here sounds too much like a binary choice. It is not really the case that a private company or government must either make begrudging concessions to moral sensibilities or, vice-versa, elude these as much as they can through clandestine methods. Rather, it is clear that if monopoly capitalism can set the standards of the exploitative and unethical, it must also control the means of standardising the ethical. Indeed, this is what Baudrillard means when he talks about capital as predicated on a "moral superstructure" (1983: 27). Using Watergate as an example, Baudrillard argues that it is necessary for "scandal" to *appear* scandalous "as a means to regenerate a moral and political principle" and for the imaginary "to regenerate a reality principle in distress" (1983: 27). Thus it is in the interests of capital to pursue what *appear* to be contradictory ends, and surely would

be if it were not for the fact that it is itself responsible for shaping the terms of these ends. In *Scanner*, Dick reproduces these contradictions through both New-Path, the rehabilitation clinic that is also the producer of Substance D, and the police apparatus, which can only uphold moral order through unspeakably immoral acts. While the novel holds out on the revelation that New-Path is also responsible for flooding the streets with brain-destroying drugs until its final twist, the sheer lack of ethicality on behalf of the police agents renders conspiracy as that which is only tacitly "beneath" the surface appearance of capital. This is why, in *Scanner*, Dick's use of *holographic* scanners and *substanceless substances* are so important, as these maintain depth as a kind of virtual effect, in order to highlight the way in which the values and standards of liberal democracy inscribe the real with its own reproducibility.

It is worth remembering here that Dick's novel sits on the precipice of Reaganism, which rubberstamped neoliberalism as America's official economic policy, rather than being fully submerged in it or its postmodern culture. It is this transitional nature that makes *Scanner*'s social critique so effective. By the time of its publishing, U.S.-backed coups in Chile and Argentina had installed neoliberal regimes by force. In 1974, not far from Dick's 1970s residence in Orange County, the construction on the Westin Bonaventure building began: a monolithic postmodern edifice whose reflective "glass skin," Jameson observes, "repels the city outside" and "achieves a peculiar and placeless dissociation […] from its neighbourhood" (1991: 42). The characters in *Scanner* stand on a threshold in regards to this changing environment. In some respects, Dick presents us with the same suburban setting that we are accustomed to finding in his work. Except here the historical referent has shifted from the 1950s to the 1960s and its class focus has moved from the bourgeois small businessman, artisan, or white-collar worker to casual labourers-cum-lumpen proletariat. Arctor works on his car, his friends ramble on about the mechanics of a ten-speed bicycle, Barris works on convoluted homemade contraptions, but this semblance of maintenance and craft is both degraded and unsustainable. It is not that the world is simply decaying or getting worse, but that it is being superseded by a new logic, to which these characters do not have access. What is striking about this

is that Arctor and the group of dopers with whom he associates resemble the degraded relics of Dick's own earlier novels. The problem, as Dick recognises, is that characters like Jack Bohlen and Rick Deckard do not tally with the conditions presented by capital in the mid-late 1970s. If the former are not characters with "depth" in the traditional realist sense of the term, they do have a particular sense of historicity in their connection to generic modes of production. In *Scanner*, however, this process of historicising is deferred through the metatext of Dick's pre-existing corpus. Thus its doper characters are both degraded and liminal because those practices of repair and craft, which are treated preferentially in Dick's earlier work, cannot be properly retrieved. It is wrong, however, to think of this as uncritical nostalgia on Dick's part, rather he demonstrates how the reorientation of capital taking place at the end of the long 1960s reduces history's depth of field, just as the more overt cultural and political outcomes of the counterculture establish its memory as a kind of blemish.

I want to turn now to the two specific narrative techniques that I mentioned above. Both cutting and un-depth function in a way that corresponds with what Jameson denotes as the return of allegory, which displaces the symbol in the transition from modernism to postmodernism:

> If the symbolic is (overhastily) assimilated to various organic conceptions of the work of art and of culture itself, then the return of the repressed of its various opposites, and of a whole range of overt or covert theories of the allegorical, can be characterized by a generalized sensitivity, in our own time, to breaks and discontinuities, to the heterogeneous […] to Difference rather than Identity, to gaps and holes rather than seamless webs and triumphant narrative progressions, to social differentiation rather than to Society and its 'totality,' in which older doctrines of the monumental work and the 'concrete universal' bathed and reflected themselves. (1991: 167-168)

For Jameson, the allegorical returns as a form of interpretation that acknowledges the impossibility of interpretation in the older "totalising" sense, while maintaining that understanding world systems

is fundamentally important. What we are dealing with here is not the relationship between things, but rather a contingent relationality through which objects are constructed. Thus allegory in this postmodern form is "horizontal rather than vertical," its interpretative work resembling "a kind of scanning that, moving back and forth across the text, readjusts its terms in constant modification of a type quite different from our stereotypes of some static medieval or biblical decoding, and which one would be tempted […] to characterize as dialectical" (Jameson, 1991: 168). The fact that Jameson considers this new process as a form of *scanning* cannot be ignored given the centrality of this function to Dick's novel. As we have seen with Fred-Arctor, *Scanner*'s protagonist constitutes a lateral relational field, as opposed to the more static symbols of human and android applied to Deckard in *Do Androids?* What I argue below is that the apparatuses, processes, and techniques of scanning constitute the allegorical form of Dick's novel. It is in transforming the text into a kind of holographic monitoring device, which records gaps rather than events, that Dick enables us to see how the work of the detective, which is analogous to our own subjective experience, is to piece together reality by picking through society's information dumps for signs of the real. The problem, however, is that the spatial organisation of multinational capital, the information overload of mass media and communication, and the flexibility of Post-Fordian reproduction creates conditions in which precisely what is "meaningful" is destabilised because history itself cannot be removed from these disorienting structures. Without the grounding of the historical referent, it becomes difficult to sort signal from noise, which, in turn, makes reality properly ideological. Here monitoring and surveillance are not simply forms of recording and playback, but of data processing in the dialectical sense that Jameson presents above.

The techniques of cutting and un-depth deal directly with the representational tensions outlined above. Cutting, which we could also call editing or splicing, refers to the way *Scanner*'s narrative conveys a model of reality comparable to the cutting rooms used in film and audio production, where celluloid or magnetic tape is literally cut and stuck together from multiple film or tape reels to compile a whole. The most literal example of this appears in the form of the intertextual

insertions that occur during Fred's psychological assessments, where extracts from Goethe's *Faust* and Joseph Bogen's writing on split-brain phenomenon interrupts the main narrative. What is more interesting, though, is the novel's use of "items" and "fantasy numbers". At several points in the text, Fred-Arctor's thoughts fix onto tangential ideas, such as: "Item. What an undercover narcotics agent fears most is not that he will be shot or beaten up but that he will be slipped a great hit of some psychedelic that will roll an endless horror feature film in his head for the remainder of his life" (Dick, 1977: 67). Elsewhere, characters' minds wander to filmic daydreams: "Charles Freck hung up and then ran a fantasy number" (1977: 4). While the intertextual extracts are more indicative of modernist collage, the anecdotal items and the degraded fantasy films create a paradoxical effect where reality's closed loop seems to jump and glitch without indicating anything "outside" or "beyond". We have seen above that in *Palmer Eldritch*, the televisual effects of Can-D and the Perky Pat layouts reveal a worrying inversion, where rather than the escapist fantasy corrupting reality it is the entropic nature of Dick's realities that reduce the potentiality of the imaginary. In *Scanner*, though, the near-absence of the sf novum makes this process feel all the more dreary. Without the mediation of the estranging science-fictional innovation, the allegory of the cutting room brings the text into a closer relation with the mediatised space of technological modernity.

Shortly after Arctor's house has been bugged, Fred consults Hank on how to produce his surveillance reports without giving away his undercover identity to his superiors. "'What you must do, really,'" Hank advises, "'is edit yourself out in – what should I call it? – an inventive, artistic…Hell, the word is, *creative*, way…'" (1977: 83; emphasis in original). Here Fred's task of reporting on himself takes up the role of artistic "creation" in the text. Yet he is not producing elaborate fantasies about his undercover alias that mimic traditional narrative techniques, but is instead trying to skilfully remove himself from sight. This has the disturbing effect of conveying a kind of anti-utopian cultural production, where the ability to cut together new realities only reproduces the limitations that global capital places on utopian thinking. In this sense, imagination takes on the spatial qualities of the self-contained, geographically dislocated sanctum of the Bonaventure building, depicting the

paradox of a new form of solipsism, where the alienation of the subject increases the more they are enveloped by globalised corporate space.

Un-depth, the second critical technique I want to address here, is used to convey the strange metonymic spatiality of late capitalism. *Scanner* is imprinted with brand names – McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Black Flag bug spray, Solarcaine sunscreen, Dr Pepper, Coca-Cola – all of which play a significant part in orienting the novel's topography. For instance, towards the beginning of the novel, these corporate signifiers are used to map Fred's transition into Arctor: "This was Fred. But later on Fred evolved into Bob Arctor somewhere along the sidewalk between the Pizza Hut and the Arco gas station (regular now a dollar two cents a gallon)" (1977: 44). Unlike Dorothy Lange's famous photographs of gas stations, here locality and rurality are replaced with metonymy and anonymity; the sprawl of Orange County mapped out through the semiotic economy of names. Indeed, what is more important to the paranoid dopers than knowing where you are – in this purgatorial Southern California you are always in the same place no matter where you go – is remembering who you are: "To survive this fascist police state […] you gotta always be able to come up with a name, your name. At all times" (1977: 5). However, the fact that Substance D impairs this basic cognitive ability and that the novel's protagonist does not have a fixed identity – he is Fred-Arctor and later, after entering rehab Bruce – places this notion of fixity under severe threat from the start. The problem for the dopers, as expressed here, is that they perceive identity as teleological, which, in turn, positions them *against* the authorities. Yet this idea, like the 1960s lingo, is a countercultural anachronism. There is no real oppositional us and them, because the dopers do not pose any significant threat to the social order. With this in mind, to come up with a name does not establish your objective relationship with other objects, but places you within the metonymic space of naming itself, alongside all the consumer products and corporate brands that constitute this field.

Not only does the importance given to names alter the status of the novel's maligned proletariat, who are effectively kipplized here, but it supplants the tangibility of consumer objects once and for all. The metonymic function of brand names takes over, perpetuating *un*-depth in their

appearance of substance, which simultaneously signifies the sheer insubstantiality of their content. This makes them simultaneously *un*-dead; they are spectral entities that no longer need functioning bodies to justify their existence. In this respect, the way in which Dick treats commodities in *Scanner* cannot help but conjure Fisher's assessment that "The most Gothic description of Capital is also the most accurate" (2009: 15). Rather than consumerist window dressing, *Scanner*'s proliferation of brand names actively destabilises the ontology of objects, further muddying the distinction between exchange and use value. Indeed, what is apparent is that a great deal of ubiquitous commodities have no use whatsoever; like the membrane of the scramble suit, their packaging appears only to contain a substance that negates its own substantiality. This idea is strikingly depicted in a scene near the end of the novel where Donna shoots at a Coca-Cola truck. While black liquid spills from the bullet holes in its cargo, the truck does not stop; in fact, the driver seems not to notice at all; it is as though it does not matter if the cans are full or empty. Donna's frustrated actions literalise a conundrum that Freck ponders at the beginning of the novel: "Anyhow, how do you shoot a chain of big drugstores?" (Dick, 1977: 5). Indeed, this is the question that the novel can only answer in the inhumane sacrifice of Fred-Arctor in the tit-for-tat between the authoritarian police force and the rehab clinic/Substance D manufacturers. "The living," one of Fred-Arctor's handlers speculates, "[…] should never be used to serve the purposes of the dead. But the dead […] should, if possible, serve the purposes of the living" (1977: 210). Yet this perspective, which turns on the Malthusian utility of the junkie, only squares the circle of the emptiness that un-depth perpetuates in its metonymic topographies. What is echoed back at us here through the empty form of Fred-Arctor-Bruce-whatever is capital as "an insatiable vampire and zombie-maker" (Fisher, 2009: 15). Worryingly, in moving across the threshold from modernity and Keynesianism to postmodernity and neoliberalism, it becomes increasingly difficult to see where in this world of hollow bodies and empty landscapes the tools for political resistance are located.

By the end of *Scanner* it seems that very little hope remains, both for its characters, for the world they inhabit, for the political moment in which Dick is writing, and for the future he looked despondently towards. Little solace can be taken from the past – the optimism of the 1960s is the root of the novel's burnout – and the future is inaccessible beyond the doper mentality of scoring the next fix – "Happiness […] is knowing you got some pills" (Dick, 1977: 10) – or the police agents' murky notions of law and order and their anti-humanist methods of trying to maintain it. The present seems to be all there is. It is this historical transition into a form of capitalism that perpetuates processes without any sense of movement or change that overloads the novel's circuitry. Therefore, in trying to navigate and map thresholds of historicity, subjectivity, and sociality, *Scanner* doubles down on systems that supplement the action, aesthetics, and tropes of genre with cognitive feedback loops, spliced-together and overlapping narratives, fragmented subjects, the sprawling but parochial consumer landscape of strip malls and chain stores, and the ubiquitous yet elusive space of metonym. It is a world-as-system in which the ideological superstructure has, in appearance at least, supplanted the productive base, where political organisation and resistance, already weak in Dick's work, appears even more untenable.

Yet if Dick's novel offers little to console us about the onset of postmodern culture and neoliberal economics, it does not totally abandon us to them either; instead, *Scanner* tentatively considers how sf might find methods capable of picking the lock of these anti-utopian structures. Indeed, while *Scanner* is particularly bleak, its existential and political exhaustion can be traced to its frustration with conspiracy's own representational inadequacies. Just as Jameson (1990) considers conspiracy as a malformed reproduction of "cognitive mapping" – his cartographic method for interpreting and challenging the ideological terrain of postmodernism – so Dick demonstrates a similar need to find a suitable aesthetic for a new kind of sf imagination that can outmanoeuvre the oppressive conditions of postmodernism. Thus the pronounced stylistic and methodological restlessness of *Scanner* warrants considering as something other than a twitching comedown from 1960s optimism and rather as a struggle to imagine a future that can alleviate the terror of the

present by reassessing and reclaiming the past. It is with this idea that I want to conclude my analysis of *Scanner* and to point towards the discussion of autobiographical memory in *VALIS* that occupies the following chapter.

Fisher's particularly bleak assessment of *Scanner* ends with a tantalising ellipsis: "Death to New-Path…" (2006) How this death might come about or what can be done to precipitate it is not stated, but rather it returns to the hypothetical posed by Freck. Despite its open-endedness, there is a paradoxical directness to Fisher's proposal, which compels us to reconsider *Scanner* against the squalid legacy of neoliberalism. Indeed, it is worth noting that this elliptical ending presents us with an early formulation of the idea he began to broach in his unfinished work *Acid Communism* (2018 [2016]). In the latter, Fisher proposes that the narratives of the 1960s and particularly the 1970s must be reclaimed for the Left, as it was during these contemporary historical moments that so much potential existed for a left-wing politics that was able to move beyond capitalism: "What if the counterculture was only a stumbling beginning, rather than the best that could be hoped for? What if the success of neoliberalism was a [sic] not an indication of the inevitability of capitalism, but a testament to the scale of the threat posed by the spectre of a society which could be free?" (Fisher, 2018: 756-757). The archaeological material that allows Fisher to make this neo-Marcusian declaration is there to see in *Scanner*, in which Dick's depiction of thresholds, boundaries, and transitions show a clear awareness of the importance of preventing the historical complexities of the counterculture and the political struggles of the 1970s from being subsumed by reactionary narratives.

This chapter has charted forms of detection across three decades of Dick's fiction. As far as genre is concerned, the question that is left at the end of *Scanner*, whose braindead detective stumbles across a field of blue flowers – the main ingredient for producing Substance D – is to what extent can this method of interpretation carry on? The decade spread out between Deckard and Fred-Arctor-Bruce produces a great amount of change as to what the detective can and cannot do, and while

Deckard's is by no means a success story, he is allowed to remain human in a way that is denied to Fred-Arctor. The latter, having failed in his task of information processing, becomes a camera, another piece of surveillance equipment that can view, but never interpret. Bruce's discovery of the blue flowers – the *Mors ontological* – is framed as an ironic resurrection: "I saw death rising from the earth" (Dick, 1977: 216). Two of the farm workers observe him kneeling symbolically in the corn under which the flowers are hidden. But the novel ends strangely – and it is not quite an ending at all – with Bruce picking one of the flowers and hiding it in his shoe: "A present for my friends, he thought, and looked forward inside his mind, where no one could see, to Thanksgiving" (1977: 217). On the one hand, the act confirms the success of the subliminal instruction he has been given; the "friends" he refers to being his police handlers. This leads Palmer to conclude that what is depicted here is "not a functionless, lyrical act, as it might seem, but a sign, a clue for those who have let him end up here, that this is indeed where Substance D is made. But not a purposeful act, for Bruce simply acts as a camera, recording information without motive or understanding" (2008: 2003). For Palmer, this seals up the structure of the novel as a postmodern loop, making the potential for empathy impossible to insert into the narrative proper. This, he argues, is the reason that Dick places an 'Author's Note' at the end of the text, which, removed from the main narrative, reflects on the casualties of the counterculture.

However, the final scene with Bruce can be read differently in relation to the 'Author's Note'. What we are not permitted to see in Bruce's mind – like the threshold over which the reader is not permitted to cross in Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'Wakefield' – is intriguing, as is this final, seemingly ironic, return to symbolism: flowers, resurrection, kneeling. What appears to be implied in the latter is the final confirmation that there is nothing left in Bruce's head, just as there is nothing left for symbols to infer. And yet the gap – what we are not allowed to see – is simultaneously what enables Dick to return to the 1960s in the 'Author's Note'. While the latter is a lament for those who have died or have been seriously harmed by drug addiction, whose legacy Dick levels squarely at 1960s hedonism, what is important is that memory, in its own strange unsettling way, returns. The symbol

of the flower, which Borges uses to connect Coleridge's dream traveller to H.G. Wells' time traveller (1999: 240-243), opens up memory in the unseen space of Bruce's mind. Through this textual refraction Dick signals a necessity to return to the 1960s as a way of reopening the frontier of the future. *Scanner* signals the end of the detective, but in doing so, as we shall see in *VALIS*, Dick initiates another generic shift: a turn to autobiographic memory.

Chapter 3: Autobiography and Theology in *VALIS*

During the last four years of his life, Dick wrote three novels: *VALIS*, *The Divine Invasion*, and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (referred to as "*Transmigration*" from here on); all of which were published between 1981 and 1982. They are, in many respects, his strangest novels and the most disputed in regards to their themes, politics, and genre. Moreover, they deal with mysterious occurrences in Dick's personal life that he could not understand, but tried desperately to comprehend. These are discussed at greater length below. All we need mention of them for now is that Dick considered them to be either evidence of the divine or his insanity; it is from these that we get the term "VALIS," which stands for "Vast Active Living Intelligence System"; and the collective term he gives these strange happenings is "2-3-74," which refers simply to the time they occurred: "February-March, 1974" (Sutin, 2005: 307). Unsurprisingly, God and madness are the two overwhelming ideas that Dick tries to get to grips with in these novels, as well as in several of his short stories, and his mammoth personal writings, which he referred to as the Exegesis. The latter is discussed in more detail below, but it is worth noting here that the metaphysical investigations that take place across this sprawling document contain the ideas that were fleshed out and reworked in the novels.

It has become something of a convention to refer to the three final novels as the "*VALIS* trilogy," a name that Dick coined himself (Dick in Lethem and Jackson, 2011 [1981]: 682), but which causes us a number of problems. Lethem's comments in the latest edited collection of the Exegesis papers are instructive on this matter:

> The assertion that Dick's last three novels, in many (important) ways so divergent, should be read as a 'trilogy' is annoying, to me anyway. As novels, they simply don't add up that way (nor is *Divine Invasion* at the level of the other two) […] keep in mind that in the wake of Star Wars and Tolkien, what publishers called "Sci-Fi" briefly enjoyed a weird boom that made

> best-sellers out of some of the long-suffering writers Dick could view as peers — Robert Silverberg, Philip Jose Farmer, Frank Herbert, and others — and that nearly all of their commercial hits were in the form of declared "trilogies" (even if some of those involved four or more books). Why not ride the unlikely gravy train? On the other hand, here was a mind more than a little prone to view things as interconnected. He'd begun to see his long shelf of earlier works forming a single tapestry of meaning. Shouldn't these new ones braid together as well? (Lethem in Lethem and Jackson, 2011: 940).

This analysis is a useful one, as it manages to group together a number of factors that are clearly at work in the background of these compositions. While in Dick's late career his financial situation was greatly improved by the royalties he received for *Blade Runner*, his yearning for mainstream acceptance did not dissipate; although, the three novels we have here would have never worked as Hollywood blockbusters and their generic unevenness were unlikely to have made them another *Dune* or *Riverworld*. The interconnectivity that Dick placed on his oeuvre in later years is also important, as Dick would mine them for information and ideas about 2-3-74 and his new cosmogony. Palmer makes a useful interjection in the issue of organising the late novels, posing a more satisfactory way of organising them: "If there is to be a trilogy then the trio should be *Valis*, *The Divine Invasion*, and *Radio Free Albemuth* [referred to as "*Albemuth*" from here on]; the last of these is another novel about the VALIS material, but certainly not a simple alternative draft of the first named. *Timothy Archer* is interesting to compare to these other novels, but that is a different point" (2003: 216 n.18). This is a much more convincing way of categorising these novels; the three novels Palmer groups together here are tonally and thematically coherent. *Transmigration* is something of an outlier, whose religious themes cause it to coil around the late texts, while its realist style connects it to the earlier mainstream texts.

As we shall see shortly, there has been much discussion about how the late novels fit in with the rest of Dick's oeuvre. Their incorporation of divinity, metaphysics, and autobiography can

certainly make them feel dislocated from earlier works, but they are by no means alien to them. There are still the same struggling "little men" trying to make sense of worlds that resist interpretation, the same oppressive political regimes, the same anonymous suburbs caught between locality and globality, the same scepticism of political and religious organisations, the same small groups of oddballs kicking around the margins of society, the same fear of schizophrenia and solipsism, and the same faint hope for the individual. We can also add that religious ideas were not absent from Dick's earlier writing. Lorenzo DiTomasso has documented the recurrent Dualist and Gnostic themes in Dick's early writing, explaining that while "Dick did not publish systematic theology until *VALIS*," what we find in the pre-*High Castle* novels "are several nascent ideas that have some root in the fundamentals of dualistic cosmologies, not excepting the conflict between the world perceived by the senses and a realm that is apprehended by other means" (2001: 50). What separates these texts' religious themes, then, is 2-3-74 and, just as importantly (and inseparably), significant changes in the organisation of capital and their resultant social and cultural conditions, which can be grouped respectively under the familiar monikers "neoliberalism" and "postmodernism".

While there is much to be said about how the final novels fit together, this chapter takes the opposite approach to mapping the vast cosmos of Dick's late period, focussing exclusively on *VALIS*. What we see in *VALIS* is a distinctive generic shift, although one that manages to retain much that is characteristic in Dick's earlier sf, into autobiographical territory. It is true that autobiography, like theology, is not new to Dick's writing. *Scanner* is certainly full of allusions to incidents in Dick's own life – like when Fred-Arctor tries to infiltrate the rehab clinic posing as a junky – and we can go back much further and find aspects of Dick's life woven into his texts – the jewellery business in *High Castle*, for example. This is not particularly remarkable for a fiction writer, who must be expected to draw on personal experiences, immediate surroundings, encounters and mishaps for their material. *VALIS* is autobiographical because it places Dick as its main "split" character and narrator: the God-obsessed Horselover Fat and the science fiction writer Phil Dick. The novel takes as its subject the

events of 2-3-74 and attempts to processes them through these dislocated reproductions of the author, who adopt the roles of protagonist and narrator; although their division is not as neat as we might hope, which makes it both a quest for the divine and an analysis of mental illness in the time of late capitalism. It is true that this is not the first time Dick writes himself into a novel or discusses the 2-3-74 events in his fiction; the earlier-written *Albemuth* features Dick as one of its two central characters and also incorporates a number of "real" events from Dick's life. However, the latter is still very much engaged with Watergate – its villain is Ferris Fremont, a Nixon analogue – and is generically skewed towards dystopia and conspiracy. *VALIS*, however, is a work of autobiographical metafiction; it retains aspects of sf and conspiracy as found in his other late-1970s works, but its subject is the author and his life.

I have said in the previous chapter that *Scanner* leaves us at a threshold, in terms of social organisation and cultural production, but also in terms of the political significance of history and memory. Palmer frames it as a novel that is characterised by "a narrowing down and stripping away" (2003: 177). In this respect, *VALIS* takes a much different approach to *Scanner* in confronting reality. The former overwhelms us with narrative excess and textual references, establishing Dick's own, discernibly more chaotic, Library of Babel. Palmer claims that "Here, if anywhere in Dick's work, we have a postmodernist text"; *VALIS*'s subversive invocation of textuality certainly supports this, but it is notably "a very strange form of subversion" (Palmer: 223, 224). Indeed, what cannot escape our attention here is that Dick's social-political critique is no longer overtly engaged with an anti-consumerist narrative: there are no Perky Pat layouts, coin-operated appliances, counterfeit antiques, or used-car salesmen. But while personal memory takes primacy here, its invocation is certainly not apolitical.

This chapter is divided into three parts. I begin with an examination of the scholarly debates surrounding *VALIS* and the late novels, which, as we shall see, are much contested. I also examine two key metatextual sites that form the basis of the novel: 2-3-74 and a much-speculated break-in at Dick's San Rafael house in 1971. While in previous chapters I have drawn attention to the cultural-

historical analysis that genre opens up, what I argue here is that Dick uses these two bizarre autobiographical events for the same purpose. The question of history in *VALIS* is a tricky one, as Palmer notes: "postmodernity does something quite drastic and unprecedented to history: it erases it" (2003: 223). Indeed, this is one particularly Jamesonian way in which *VALIS* can be considered as reproducing postmodernism as the logic of late capitalism: as a prison house of nostalgia from which the dominant culture prevents our stepping outside. At the same time, however, the novel's invocation of the culture and politics of the long 1960s and the traumatic disillusionment of the post-Watergate 1970s resonate with what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction" (2004 [1988]: ix). What Hutcheon argues in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) is that postmodern literature is a deliberate mode of engaging critically with history: "this kind of novel asks us to recall that history and fiction are themselves theoretical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time" (2004: 105). To this extent, it is certainly true to say that Dick employs a similar approach in *VALIS* by using autobiographical events as sites on which to stage enquiries into the contingency of memory and, indeed, the terms under which we are forced to approach history. Indeed, *VALIS* does not attempt to re-approach and recast events from Dick's life or the shared "experience" of the 1960s and 1970s in a social realist sense, rather, what is striking about the text is that its autobiographical framework reproduces memory as condensed and contradictory, defined by fissures, gaps, generalisations, and overdeterminations that are exacerbated by perspectival shifts which are themselves products of historically contingent material conditions and cultural dominants. In his essay 'The Shunts in the Tale: The Narrative Architecture of Philip K. Dick's *VALIS*', Umberto Rossi states that "There is a chasm in *VALIS*"(2012: 249), which the novel's relentless narativising tries to fill, but whose efforts only perpetuate the sense that something like a "tangible" history cannot be grasped in a mass-information society. Nevertheless, for Dick, sites of interpretative struggle can provide much-needed familiarity as well as historical dissolution. What I propose in my argument is that Dick uses autobiography to encourage us to revisit events and to question their "substance" in a way that helps us to understand how

history and society are constructed ideologically. Therefore, returning to these contested sites – theorising them, as he and his characters are prone to do – constitutes a political act of resistance to the "official" version of history. By asking us to participate in theorising and historicising through autobiography, Dick turns events from his own life into staging posts from which struggles over history can be mounted in the hope that the oppressive closed loop of late capitalism can be broken.

The second part of the chapter applies these ideas to the *VALIS*'s depiction of the psychiatric hospital. What I argue here is that the hospital constitutes a symbolic site that enables us to process the heterogeneous and contradictory material that *VALIS* overloads us with. It is one of the rare depictions of a social institution in the novel, which makes it an oddly liminal space in a text which is mapped out more by religious texts than social infrastructure or physical geography.

I conclude my analysis by looking at the way in which Dick problematizes the concept of "authority" through the blurring of psychoanalysis and theology. This builds on the ideas put in place by my examination of the hospital and seeks to expand on the idea that *VALIS* is a novel whose political impetus lies in its negation of ossified narratives.

The red thread running through this investigation is the notion of autobiography as a means of reorienting our approach to history. In late-capitalist society, the alienation of the subject is accentuated by the decentralisation of capital, with its elusive mobility and insubstantial materiality doubling down on the shallow holographic structure of reality that we have seen in *Scanner*. What both Palmer and Fisher perceive in *Scanner* are the foundations of left-wing pessimism in the face of an imminent neoliberal hegemony, summed-up by the now famous quotation that Fisher attributes to both Jameson and Žižek: "It is easier to imagine the end of the world then the end of capitalism" (Fisher, 2009: 2). *VALIS*, now almost forty years old, considers this narrowing of potential for political change from the early stages of neoliberalism. As we shall see, it is a novel that has disappointed and frustrated many scholars, while for others it has proved an intriguing, albeit enigmatic, meditation on the anti-utopian conditions of neoliberal capitalism and postmodern culture. It is a text that will disappoint those looking for definitive answers, but will fascinate many who can find in its labyrinth

of citations and speculations its striking challenges to hegemonic structures of knowledge and cultural production.

Rossi begins his essay 'Shunts in the Tale: The Narrative Architecture of Philip K. Dick' by highlighting Dick's absence from Farah Mendelsohn's chapter on religion in the *Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003). This omission, Rossi believes, is down to "a certain critical embarrassment surrounding his later novels" (2012: 243). He then goes on to cite a number of examples from within Dick scholarship where the late novels have been treated with varying degrees of scepticism, which are worth recalling here with some elaborations and additions. Jameson gives these later texts short shrift, referring to them fleetingly in 'History and Salvation in Philip K. Dick' as "the religious novels" (2005: 263) before sealing them off from the novels of the 1960s. Freedman, on the other hand, refers to *Scanner* and *Transmigration* as "brilliant successes," while designating *VALIS* and *The Divine Invasion* "interesting failures" (Freedman in Mullen et al, 1992: 147), later rebranding both of the latter as "pretentiously tedious" (2000: 165). Then there is Eric Rabkin's more damning analysis, which questions the state of Dick's mental health: "Why did Dick really write the VALIS TRILOGY? He said his writing was an attempt to make sense of his life, and often so is insanity. Frankly, I think he did go insane" (Rabking in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al., 1992 [1988]: 186).

These criticisms imply various issues with Dick's late writing, but they can be corralled into a general narrative which takes issue with their politics (or supposed lack of). What is apparent across the late novels is that theological speculation, textual destabilisation, and a general gravitation towards metaphysics over materiality make them difficult to accept as social critiques in the same way as his most celebrated 1960s novels. This, I believe, is a blinkered way of looking at Dick and his oeuvre, which, at its worst, peddles a cynical narrative of Dick as a fringe lunatic.

Having said this, there have been a number of significant engagements with these texts – most of which focus on *VALIS* – that have rightly sought to approach them as political works. Suvin's appraisal of the late novels is the most striking in its attempts to separate their theological speculation from their social critique, asking, "what can Dick's late novels say to those of us who are

not interested in theology as believers or even near-believers, but who are prepared to see theology and cosmogony as an interesting and perhaps highly important symptom of earthly relationships?" (2002: 370). Suvin's approach produces some fascinating insights – his reading of *Albemuth* brilliantly highlights the radical politics of Dick's late work – and some honest critiques of Dick's failings – his poor representation of women, his disinterest in economics. However, his attempt to extract the political from the theological makes it somewhat awkward and produces some stilted readings of these textually rich late novels.

Most scholarship concerning the late texts has tried to tackle Dick's metaphysics as expressing a politics of their own, rather than running parallel to the novels' social-critique. Scott Durham sees these texts as staging the "death of the subject" as a way of reproducing and critiquing the individual's experiences of late capitalism. Here he sets himself against Sutin's earlier critiques of Dick's ontological interests:

> I am in disagreement with the prevailing view among Marxist critics that Dick's late, theological works represent an unambiguous turning away from politics and a pointless obsession with 'ontological puzzles.' Whatever their ultimate political implications – and they are, as we shall see, by no means unambiguous – Dick's works remain, in my view, an attempt to grapple with contradictions inherent in the politicization of late-capitalist delirium which no counter-hegemonic cultural politics can ultimately fail to address. (Durham in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al, 1992: 189)

For Durham, the text's interpretative disorientations and ontological instabilities do not signal a shift into some postmodern cynicism, in which meaning has been overrun by texts and political expression has been rendered impossible by the ubiquitous penetration of global capital into everyday life. Instead, in resorting to greater self-reflexivity and metatexuality, Dick seeks to engage with the lived experience of late-capitalist society. In this respect, the late novels are able to convey "the history of

the everyday without renouncing the imperious demands that the everyday production of delirium makes upon the subject" (Durham in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al, 1992: 198).

Palmer responds to Durham in his essay 'Postmodernism and the Birth of the Author in *Valis*'.[14] Palmer's idea of *VALIS* as a "strange form of [postmodernist] subversion" diverges from the political value of textuality that Durham proposes. Indeed, the problem Palmer finds with Durham's argument is that "Dick values that which is unassimilated" (2003: 227), which makes the idea of diffusing the subject into textuality problematic. Instead, Palmer sees *VALIS* as presenting a "collision between ethical seriousness and a postmodernist sense of the textuality of meaning" (2003: 237). The former applies to Dick's humanist sensibilities – his struggling little men and selfless acts of empathy – while the latter, Rossi explains, is taken by Palmer to mean "metafictionality" (2012: 245). Thus Palmer confronts *VALIS* "less [as] a phenomenon to be experienced and coped with, and more [as] a concept to be defined and speculated about" (2003: 223). This is a useful idea, as despite all of *VALIS*'s interpretative oscillations, which destabilise the ontology of its subjects, its structural dislocation forces us to return to interpretative sites, to retrace and reconsider the struggle for meaning that is played out across the text. What is less convincing about Palmer's argument, however, is the way in which the author is reborn by his "admission that he believes in VALIS" (2003: 235). Given the text's resistance and uncertainty towards any singular interpretation, it is far more fruitful to think of it as calling into question the inadequacy of interpretative models. *VALIS* does not want to shock us by revealing that Dick believes in VALIS, rather it shows us that the interpretative tools that the hegemony provides prevent us from demanding different realities.

In emphasising the "painful blockage" (2003: 237) between ethics and textuality, Palmer overlooks the potential that Durham perceives in Dick's theology to proposes a "premature resolution of the antagonism between subject of counter-cultural experience and the subject of hegemonic social memory" (Durham in Mullen, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al, 1992:: 197). This, despite its

[14] Published in *Science Fiction Studies* in 1991, but included as the concluding chapter of *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern*.

inadequacies, "maintains a stance of contestation: a subversive antagonism suffuses his mystical conversion. Dick's theology remains bound less to transcendence than to immanent contradiction; his theological moment remains one in which a collective subject capable of grasping such contradiction is imagined" (1992: 197). Here we can see the fundamental importance of the text: collectivity must go on, somehow. This is not an easy problem for Dick to overcome – his groups are always haunted by the opposing repressive forces of homogeneity and atomisation – and I am in agreement with Durham that what we get in *VALIS* is only a "premature resolution" or partial solution rather than a great leap forward.

The debate surrounding the late novels has been complicated and enriched by the first extensive publication of Dick's theological writings in *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick* (2011; referred to as the "*Exegesis"* from here on). This has created a greater demand for synthesising these writings with the late novels, as Erik Davis argues in his study of the religious metatexts that preoccupy both *VALIS* and the Exegesis. Davis' argument is interesting in that it effectively fills in the other side of Suvin's secular political reading of the late novels, highlighting instead a "discomfort" (Davis in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 173) in considering Dick as a theologian.

It is worth adding that the publication of the *Exegesis* coincides with an increasing interest in theology within left-wing scholarship. Crestin Davis (2009) argues that the collapse of communism in the 1980s and 1990s, brought left-wing thinking to a point of crisis, which has subsequently been supplemented by a theological turn. Theology refutes the shallow materiality of capitalist reality, while offering a potential way of thinking outside its constrictive boundaries:

> Thinkers of resistance to capitalist depredation could no longer appeal to the humanist-Marxist tradition alone, especially as the history of actually existing Marxism finally folded before the juggernaut of capitalism. This was the opening for the theological. The portal to theology was opened precisely because capitalism is ultimately a self-enclosed structure, and

> so theology gives us a way to transcend capital premised on relationality and not on Ego (the Hegelian "In-Itself"). (Davis in Žižek and Milbank, 2009: 12)

The philosophers Davis is referring to specifically – Slavoj Žižek, John Milbank, and Alain Badiou – carry substantially more scholarly capital than Dick. For this reason alone, it is worth pointing out that Dick's late work pre-empts this necessity to broach capital via theology by quite some way. It is also worth considering this in regards to the predicament that the politics of Dick's late novels present. Davis is in no doubt that theology without Marxism is untenable: "the material world cannot be written off in favor of some kind of retreat into ethereal transcendence" (2009: 12). Therefore, if theology cannot be of political use without Marxism – an argument that is echoed in Suvin's comparisons of Dick's late writing to liberation theology – so it must be that Dick cannot establish his theology to be without Marxism: "In essence," Dick states in the *Exegesis*, "the real (secret) Christians are communists, and the real (secret) communists are Christians" (Dick in Lethem and Jackson, 2011: 483). This circle is squared by Erik Davis, who not only makes the connection between Badiou, Žižek, and Dick, but who demonstrates how paranoia is worked through in *VALIS* and the 'Exegesis' "by placing […] [it] in a theological context" (Davis in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 188).

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the political function of genre in Dick's writing; therefore, my analysis of autobiography in *VALIS* continues to argue for an understanding of Dick's writing as inherently political. In 1976, Dick, weary from post-Watergate disillusionment, renounced his political intentions as a writer: "So my novel in progress [what would become *VALIS*] […] has nothing to do with politics; it has to do with the mystery religions of the first century B.C. and what they had discovered about restoring the faculties that man possessed before the Fall […] But I am no longer politically active, and this will show up in my writing" (Dick in Sutin, 1995 [1976]: 35). This kind of claim is typical of Dick's thinking, which, like the content of his stories, tends to oscillate rather than sit for long on a single fixed point. Dick's weariness here is the same that we find in *Scanner* and in

Jameson's frustration with the degraded form of conspiracy to cognitively map the total structure of capital. If the scandal of Watergate is itself a sham – "the exposure of the cover-up was itself a cover-up" (Dick in Sutin, 1995: 36) – then the field of liberal democracy becomes an untenably narrow perceptual and discursive structure. This, in turn, affects the very nature of what constitutes social critique, as the conventional discourse structure of the "political" is substantially weakened by its complicity in this political closed loop. Thus the combination of autobiography and theology, both of which foreground concepts of authority and belief, offer rich grounds for debating the subject and their relation to the social totality.

Durham argues that the price *VALIS* pays for enacting its death of the subject is the "destruction of a genre" (Durham in Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., et al., 1992: 198). This is because to eliminate the centrality formerly permitted to the subject is to simultaneously revoke the stable conditions that the novum requires to create radical difference. This idea is further unpacked by Palmer: "It is commonly maintained that any given invention or gizmo in SF should be subjected to sober socio-political extrapolation, explanation and testing. One cannot simply, fancifully, introduce robot psychiatrists or men with three penises into one's 'novum' without thinking through the technical, psychological and social ramifications" (Palmer, 2003: 208). And yet, Palmer continues, Dick "commonly flouts" (2003: 208) this logic; many of his sf gizmos are not sober, but whimsical, negating logical explanation while producing pronounced effects. Palmer uses an incident from *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (1964), in which the protagonist, Chuck Rittersdorf, helps Lord Running Clam (an alien slime mould) give birth: "[Clam] is an instance of the frivolous Dickian gizmo, made sympathetic as a character, but not explicable in any serious SF fashion. In this instance, the frivolous gizmo aspect is an acknowledgement of the fragility of the empathy that is dramatized" (2003: 210). The same processes is at work when we encounter unexplained radical gestures, be they rebellious, as in *The Man Who Japed*, or empathic, like the black man who hugs the fascistic General Buckman at the end of *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1974). A similar effect is visible in Dick's in-breaking realities, like when Dick's San Francisco blurs into Tagomi's in *High Castle*. Dick uses these techniques

because they challenge the fixity of genre. In *VALIS*, autobiography is predicated on narrative inconsistencies, which proceed from the protagonist's attempt to work through his belief in a science-fictional god – which may, may not, or may also be a manifestation of psychosis. This collision of genres is clearly disruptive to the way that we are accustomed to think about the function of either. Thus it situates the collision between these modes at the heart of its contestation of reality. If the world increasingly resembles a set of texts, then doing politics – as a writer, at least – becomes a struggle for the means by which texts are read.

We cannot proceed any further in this discussion without a synopsis of *VALIS* and two occurrences in Dick's life that act as the novel's essential metatexts. Like *Scanner*, *VALIS* is set amongst the ruins of countercultural burnout, but rather than dilapidated suburbs and doper communities, we are presented instead with an ordinary 1970s Orange County and a group of men – Horselover Fat and his friends, David, Kevin, and Phil – who debate theology rather than ramble through drug-fuelled rap sessions. This, however, does not make the novel feel any less unhinged, in fact, the disappearance of the sf novum has the effect of making paranoia feel all the more immediate. The novel begins with Fat in the throes of a mental breakdown, brought on by his friend Gloria Knudson's suicide. Gloria is a schizophrenic whose mind has been wrecked by LSD. In this respect, she is like the dopers in *Scanner*: an anachronism who cannot adapt to the post-counterculture world. But for Fat, she is also a kind of entropic force, like kipple or gubble, dragging him down into madness: "he had been drawn into an unspeakable psychological game. There was no way out. Gloria Knudson had wrecked him, her friend, along with her own brain" (Dick, 1981: 10). The problem for Fat is that having kicked dope, he is still committed to helping others – something his psychiatrist has advised him against. But this empathic drive seems only to drag him from one crisis to another, making him a kind of surrogate for other people's misery.

It is worth stating here the novel's problematic representation of its female-gendered characters. Gloria is later doubled by Sherri Solivg, a cancer sufferer who revels in her own misery, and both fill an eerie space left by the absence (again through suicide) of Fat's ex-wife. All the female-

gendered characters die and all perpetuate madness and suffering in one form or another, with the exception of the doper girl Stephanie who the narrator hypothesises might have died (1981: 51). There are some intriguing nods as to how these characters may, in fact, be deliberately misrepresented and misinterpreted. Gloria's mother gives Fat a photograph of Gloria and her family at Christmas with a note scribbled on the back that reads, "*How we made her feel gratitude for our love*" (1981: 16; emphasis in original). The deaths of these women haunt Fat and the narrator, but they do not undo their unhuman representation.

Gloria's suicide is attributed with Fat's breakdown and fragmentation. The novel begins with the line: "Horselover Fat's nervous breakdown began the day he got the phonecall from Gloria asking if he had any Nembutals" (1981: 9). But two pages later, the novel shifts from third to first-person narration to inform us: "I am Horselover Fat, and I am writing this in the third person to gain much-needed objectivity" (1981: 11). Fat is split. However, his narrating other "half" turns out to be none other than Phil Dick, whose name is revealed to be a translation of Horselover Fat from Greek and German: "'But that's you, "Philip" means "Horselover" in Greek, lover of horses. "Fat" is the German translation "of Dick"'" (1981: 188). Here character splitting is problematized even more than in *Scanner*. Phil, who is not mentioned by name until Chapter 8 (two chapters before the translation scene occurs), is another iteration of Philip K. Dick the author: he is a science fiction writer attributed with writing the same books, and is an intelligent, rational, and, seemingly, observant chronicler of Fat's tale. In other words, he presents the sane, respectable version of Dick the writer, rather than his mentally unstable conspiracy-crank version. This, of course, creates substantial ontological instability, with splitting clearly problematizing the "much needed objectivity" Fat desires. The relationship is complicated further because the split is not neat: it slips, merges, breaks, and at one point, Fat disappears entirely.

The split narrator/protagonist is undergirded by a structural and generic division in *VALIS*, which Rossi identifies as "two novels in one, or two competing textual levels struggling against each other, belonging to two different literary genres: the autobiographical novel and religious science

fiction" (2012: 245). He assigns these genres to the two unresolvable tensions Palmer identifies in the text: "the ethical seriousness is on the side of the autobiographical interpretation, while the 'postmodern sense of the textuality of meaning,' if we read 'textuality' as meta-fictionality, is on the side of religious sf" (2012: 245). The relationship between the novel's fundamental interpretative tension – its "dialectic of differentiation and unification" (Palmer, 2003: 227) – and the structural dislocations it perpetuates through genre are fundamental to reading *VALIS*; as Rossi notes, "a monological reading, will always fall short of the fascinating duplicity of this book" (2012: 245). Like Fat and Phil, the structure of the text refuses to synthesise or divide neatly. As a result, there is an identifiable break in the text which undergirds this contradictory terrain. This occurs at the point at which Fat's downward spiral is reversed by the introduction of a conspiratorial sf film, "*Valis*". The changes that this brings about in the relationship between characters and the way that we consider the text as "realistic" are significant and, therefore, make it necessary for us to consider the novel as comprising of two sections.

The first part of the novel deals with Fat's encounter with God, whom he believes has contacted him through a pink beam of light. The divine source of this information tranference is referred to as "VALIS" (Vast Active Living Intelligence System) or "Zebra," the latter attesting to the hidden, "camouflaged" (Dick, 1981: 78) nature of this information, which only a select few can access. Fat ploughs his energies into researching the pink beam, a phenomenon Dick himself believed he encountered in the mid-1970s as part of series of possibly divine phenomena he termed "2-3-74" (discussed below). This linkage is made explicit in the novel's metatextual reproduction of Dick's own writings from the Exegesis, whose theological investigations are an attempt to explain 2-3-74, and are attributed here to Fat's *Tractates Cryptica Scriptura*, the latter appearing as textual insertions in embedded in the narrative and collected in the appendix at the end of the book. Fat's quest for divine knowledge, though, "is not the scholarly research of a trained scholar," as we encounter in publishers-cum-conspiracy theorists in Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988), "but the rambling pursuit of a self-taught thinker" (Rossi, 2012: 247). Again, this resonates with Dick's own unorthodox

autodidactic methods in the Exegesis. Yet Phil is highly sceptical about Fat's pursuits, which he sees as damaging to his mental health. Fat's efforts, he believes, are a manifestation of mental illness: "People suffering nervous breakdowns often do a lot of research, to find explanations for what they are undergoing. The research, of course, fails" (1981: 22). This tension is made more acute by the juxtaposition of Fat's theological quest with his hospitalisation and subsequent psychiatric treatment following his suicide attempt.

Fat's experience of the hospital, in which he meets a doctor who appears to understand his theological ideas, is quickly replaced by the destructive relationship with Sherri. Binding himself to another self-destructive female, Fat places himself and his theological quest in a dangerous proximity to death. This part of the novel ends with a traumatic break. When Sherri dies from her cancer, Fat is pronounced spiritually dead (for the second time) by Phil – "Dragged down into the grave by two malignant women" (Dick, 1981: 150) – with Phil brought forward to act as a witness to this pain.

The second part of the novel that introduces the mis-en-abyme is itself a double of 2-3-74: a schlocky sf film that Kevin discovers, called *Valis*. It is after watching this that Fat's role is temporarily reversed, as the conspiratorial content of *Valis* appears to prove that his theories are true. This leads the group on a trip across the state to Sonoma, to meet the film's producer-actors Eric and Linda Lampton, and their Brian Eno-esque musical collaborator Mini Brent. The Lamptons have a daughter, Sophia, who resembles the Gnostic figure of the same name, but whose authenticity cannot be fully accepted by the group whose new faith is shaken by the Lamptons' crank ideas of starting a commune. Eventually, in fear of the Lamptons' madness, the group flee back to the safety of Orange County, but they return without Fat. This is not before Sophia heals Phil, making his delusional persona disappear – if she is a fake, then she is a fake with therapeutic powers. This is not the end of Fat, however, who returns when it is revealed that Sophia has been killed in an accident after Brent tried to access her divine knowledge. The novel ends in a final confrontation between Phil and Fat, the supposedly sane and rational confronting the insane and delusional, after which Fat embarks on his globe-trotting search for the deity while Phil remains behind watching TV.

This sketch of *VALIS* helps us to see how splits and dislocations underpin its narrative. What I want to consider now is how these work together with two key autobiographical metatexts. These, I argue, do not provide us with an essential "meaning," but in comprehending how Dick uses these as sources for his theoretical explorations, we can learn a great deal about how *VALIS* confronts reality through the tension between autobiography and science fiction. The first of these incidents is the break-in at Dick's house in San Rafael which took place on 17th November, 1971. On arriving home from a rare trip outdoors (Dick suffered from agoraphobia throughout his life), Dick found that his house had been burgled. The circumstances, however, were odd: his fire-proof filing cabinet appeared to have been blown open with explosives, while most of the valuable household items were left untouched, and, more sinister still, military-style boot prints were trampled across the floors. These details are disputed (Sutin, 2005: 270-272). Nevertheless, regardless of their precise accuracy, the events sparked Phil's paranoid imagination – "Immediately after the break-in Phil began to theorize about who and why" (2005: 270) – while scaring him to the point that he would subsequently flee to Vancouver.

Despite the traumatic nature of the incident – whatever it was – it presented a tantalizing puzzle, and Dick revelled in the opportunity this gave him to speculate on the possible agencies and motives behind the incident. Sutin pieces together eight of Dick's working theories from a 1974 interview with Paul Williams, and various essays, journals, and letters, amongst which he cites religious fanatics, right-wing militias, the Black Panthers, narcotics agents, military intelligence, and himself as possible perpetrators (2005: 272-274). Notably, despite their varying credibility, none of these theories could be proved or disproved. This is the problem with conspiracy theory, which in *VALIS*, Phil relates to mental illness: "incomprehensible events occur; your life becomes a bin for hoax-like fluctuations of what used to be reality" (Dick, 1981: 26). And yet we can see here that the autobiographical event opens up a field of relations: that of the "dimly perceivable, other reality of economic and social institutions" of the "postmodern sublime" (Jameson, 1991:38). Thus while the danger of conspiracy is that it threatens to reduce everything to a paranoid "sameness" – which is

how Palmer frames postmodern textuality in *VALIS* (2003: 232) – it also presents a framework for perceiving the ideological structures that underpin late capitalism.

The second series of events are those given the collective name 2-3-74, which stands for "February-March, 1974" (Sutin, 2005: 307). These form the autobiographical materials proper of the Exegesis and the late novels, providing the basis of "Dick's endless sequence of interpretations" (Lethem and Jackson, 2011: 9) in this late period. Their function as an inexhaustible source of interpretative materials connects them to the break-in theories, although they are distinctively more mystical. The first in these strange events occurred when Dick was recovering from an operation on an infected wisdom tooth. Dosed-up on prescription sodium pentothal for the pain, Dick opened his front door to a dark-haired delivery girl whose necklace, bearing the fish symbol of the early Christians, somehow caused "a sudden triggering of what he experienced as past lives and genetic memories" (Sutin, 2005: 310). Dick calls this experience "anamnesis," Plato's term for "recollecting eternal truths, the World of Ideas, within ourselves" (2005: 310). A series of strange phenomena followed. In March, Dick was subjected to "two separate, unsleeping, nightlong episodes of visual psychedelia" (Lethem and Jackson, 10: 2011), one of which involved being bombarded by a fantastic display of modern art pictures (the inspiration for the scramble suit in *Scanner*). He was then instructed by a divine entity to baptise his son. He was subjected to threatening voices emanating from his radio. He received a strange selection of Xeroxed documents (the "Xerox Missive"), which appeared to come from communist sources and were interpreted by Dick as portent of some unnamed conspiracy. He believed that he had been inhabited by the consciousness of an early Christian called Thomas, who could read Greek and Latin – which Dick could not. He thought that the Ancient Rome of the early Christians had been superimposed over contemporary California, which he would formulate as a dualistic construct: the oppressive simulation/Logos of the Black Iron Prison and the ontologically real world of the Palm Tree Garden. And he claimed that information transmitted via a pink beam of energy had alerted him to a potentially fatal medical condition in his infant son. All of these bizarre events are worked into the late novels and processed through the

Exegesis. While it is tempting to use them as evidence of an unstable mind, it is important to note that Dick was himself a sceptic – like Phil the narrator in *VALIS* – just as we should not forget that the potency of his work is derived from an imaginative mind that persistently asked "what if…".

Just as with the break-in, Dick takes these ideas to task. Rossi (2012) picks up on Dick's application of tachyon theory as an explanation for some of these events, to which we can add Claude Shannon's information theory, Erwin Shroedinger's theory of negentropy, and Jim Watson and Francis Crick's double helix DNA structure. 2-3-74 presents a contested territory which facilitates Dick's vertiginous dialectical engagement across a wide field of epistemological and theological ideas. Intriguingly, the varying accounts and interpretations of the 2-3-74, as provided by Dick, his biographers, and literary critics, seem only to perpetuate the feeling of ontological uncertainty of these events. 2-3-74, like VALIS, is a kind of living information system, which changes as it is retold and reprocessed. Davis (2015) brings our attention to an inconsistency concerning Dick's wisdom teeth, namely that Tessa, Dick's then wife, disputes that he ever had them removed. If we are to believe Tessa, who is "not the most reliable of narrators," then "Dick's creative revision makes sense, since the term wisdom foreshadows the Gnostic wisdom figure who would come to play such an important role in Dick's speculations" (Davis in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 176) – to which one could add the pop-culture symbolism of sodium pentothal as a *truth* serum. For Davis, this undergirds the notion that, "in Dick's case at least, autobiography and fiction are hopelessly intertwined" (2015: 176). Yet if these two categories are inseparable in Dick's writing, it does not mean that they simply feedback sameness. Instead, the contingency of autobiographical information diverts its generic function away from a fixed truth and re-orientates it as a site which must be constantly revisited and worked through. This may have the effect of disorienting and frustrating the reader, but its logic correlates with the way in which mass communication technologies and mass media present us with vast networks of information, as well as the way in which ideology presents contested symbolic sites. Therefore, the autobiographical metatexts presented here provide us with interpretative fields from which to build new theories and contest hegemonic narratives.

Disputed Territory

Patrick O'Donnell describes postmodern subjects as those who "celebrate fluidity, schizophrenia, and deterritorialization […] yet whose obsession with boundaries and boundary crossing suggests a collective nostalgia for the old binaries, economies, orders, and nations" (2000: 12). These nostalgic categories do not just reflect yearnings to regain tangible commodities and institutions, but also reflect a desire to return to older paranoid relations. The latter constitutes a more distinctive "them" and "us" relationship, a McCarthyist reds-under-the-bed narrative, whose stable dualism becomes less tenable – even during the later stages of the Cold War – as capital becomes more mobile. What *VALIS* makes clear is that there is no means of bringing back these nostalgic relations. Indeed, when Phil attempts to historicise mental illness by contrasting 1960s hedonism to an authoritarian paranoia, he self-consciously invokes this anachronistic framework:

> It was like a plague. No one could discern how much was due to drugs. This time in America – 1960 to 1970 – and this place, the Bay Area of Northern California, was totally fucked. I'm sorry to tell you this, but that's the truth. Fancy terms and ornate theories cannot cover this fact up. The authorities became as psychotic as those they hunted. They wanted to put all persons who were not clones of the establishment away. The authorities were filled with hate. (Dick, 1981: 12)

It is no coincidence that this passage is incorporated into the narration of Gloria's death, who is depicted through a collection of degraded countercultural artefacts: she drives a V.W., she wears a t-shirt with "Mick Jagger's leering face on it," she has a cat called Chairman Mao, and she is adamant that "they" are out to get her – *they* stole her bank account (Dick, 1981: 13). But no "they" exists;

"She had begun to fill in all the details with tools as precise as dental tools" (1981: 14). Here the novel blurs the distinction between historicising and a pathological paranoia which supplements epistemological gaps with narrative excess.

Towards the end of the novel, Fat returns from Greece with the picture of a vase, which is marked with a pattern that he believes is the secret insignia of the Saviour he is seeking: two snakes twisting around each other like the DNA double helix (1981: 249-250). Later, he rings Phil from Japan to tell him that he is on his way to Micronesia: "'By the time I'm finished, I'll get to see where a lot of World War Two took place'" (1981: 255). Yet these "historical" geographies and their artefacts cannot restore the "substance" of history. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator rushes through a condensed history of the 1970s: "This was 1971. In 1972 he would be up north in Vancouver […] In 1976, totally crazy with grief, Horselover Fat would slit his wrist" (Dick, 1981: 10-11). While there does not seem to be much out of the ordinary here, Rossi points out that its narrative "leaps" and skips (2012: 246); the narrator's memory is full of gaps – it is itself an archipelago.

This fragmentation of historicity is extrapolated by the novel's revealing inclusion of the Marin County Civic Centre, which, the narrator tells us, the authorities "dismantled" (1981: 12) as a security measure during Angela Davis' incarceration in the Marin County jail. The description is another shuffling of the 1970s deck, recalling a political radicalism distant from the suburban Orange County of *VALIS*, as well as the high modernist aesthetics of Frank Lloyd Wright, who designed the Civic Centre. Thus in the space of the novel's first chapter, Dick sets about deconstructing modernism and the political radicalism of the 1960s and 70s: "The elevators got unwired; doors got relabled with spurious information. This was to baffle radicals who might intend trouble" (Dick, 1981: 12). The kinds of radicalism Dick finds in Davis and Wright – political and aesthetic – and their association with praxis and functionality are themselves situated as forms of nostalgia. In the Chinese finger trap of postmodern paranoid logic, "where the harder you pull to get out, the tighter the rap gets" (1981: 10), these practices no longer seem viable. This has the worrying implication of tilting Dick's perennial unease with mass politics into the apolitical territory of a writer who in 1976 wrote:

"perhaps my days of being a fighter for freedom are over" (Dick in Sutin, 1995: 34). But just as we should not take Dick at his word, neither should we rush to thinking that *VALIS* sets out to dismantle the political.

To interpret the above as Dick dismissing the political foundations on which *VALIS* is clearly constructed is contradicted by the autobiographical significance of the Civic Centre itself. In the early 1970s, the building was still home to the Marin County Sheriff's Department, who handled the break-in at Dick's house. It was, therefore, also the location of the police incident report, which Dick had not been permitted to see, and which Paul Williams tried to chase down three years later, only to be denied access as well (Williams, 1975: 93). Emanuel Carrère frames this as a fortunate non-discovery for Williams, who having sung the praises of Dick's "feverish imagination […] would have been embarrassed to discover that he had been speaking the truth" (2005 [1993]: 258). Williams admits as much, but also recognises what is compelling about the event: "I realised that it didn't really matter to me who broke into Philip Dick's house three years ago, or why. What I was really asking was a literary question: How real is Phil Dick's sense of reality, and to what extent does it intersect with other ordinary people's, with my own?" (Williams, 1975: 93) Williams, in searching for clues "out there" in the "real world," is made to revisit the theoretical, "literary," site of the break-in, just as readers of the late works must do. What turns out to be most important about the break-in is that it provides a narrative structure for engaging with the past; it brings us back to a set of ideas and conditions, whose theorising enables us to contemplate their construction and how they might be reconstructed differently. In this respect, autobiography as metafiction opens up ways of seeing that can be beneficial in resisting hegemonic narratives. What is more, it can establish new forms of connectivity, as evinced in the second part of the novel when Fat and his friends are temporarily unified through Fat's divine knowledge and the forming of the "Rhipidon Society" (Dick, 191: 191): a reconstruction of the secret revolutionary nature of the early Christians.

In *VALIS*, the psychiatric hospital functions in a similar way to the break-in and 2-3-74. Through it we are able to see beyond the negative causal relation between the counterculture and the comedown of the 1970s. The hospital constitutes a contested symbolic site that provides access to the past in a way that enables it to be recalled without thinking about it nostalgically.

As the early appearance of the Civic Centre foreshadows, the rest of the novel is distinctively lacking in monuments, landmarks, commodities, and brand names (with the exception of pharmaceuticals). Indeed, it has the eerie effect of making the reader nostalgic for the characteristic consumerist squalor of Dick's previous works. Instead of an entropic consumer landscape, *VALIS* is marked out by mental illness and death, which proceed from the narrative antagonisms between believing the "insane" Fat or the "sane" Phil, and the interpretative disharmony produced by the formal contradictions between autobiography and theological sf. In this respect, kipplization is evinced in the confusion of *VALIS*'s characters, its textual clutter, and logical dislocations, which perpetuate a sense of interpretative uncertainty. This makes the hospital something of an oddity, as its institutional status gives it a commanding symbolic "authority" that is at odds with the novel's indistinctive physical geography and absence of social institutions. Indeed, it *appears* to depict the determinable boundaries that O'Donnell designates as nostalgic; however, it is precisely this appearance that undermines it. Rather than constituting a monolithic node, the hospital comes attached with rules and preconceptions – much like a genre – which cause us to approach it in a certain way. In other words, it presents an overtly *ideological* site.

While ideology is an evasive thing in itself, lacking materiality and expressing a relation between ourselves and the world, what it helps us process here is the contradictory formulations at work within the text. Therefore, the hospital is "privileged," in this respect, because even though we might tend to think of it in a teleological way, which is to say, that it is strictly a place of healing, it does not take much for us to notice that this function is tied to a number of contradictory processes. This idea is famously attributed to the concept of the "imaginary" developed by Lacan. In his study of the "mirror stage", the infant, catching a glimpse of themselves in the mirror, "misrecognises" the

wholeness of the image they see reflected back at them, believing it to be a direct representation of their *whole* selves. What the infant misrecognises, though, is that the coherence of the image fails to construe that they are neither physically nor mentally developed, nor that we are fragmented subjects split by the radical otherness of the unconscious.[15] Lacan's idea is taken up by Althusser, who applies Lacan's formula to ideology:

> Ideology is a matter of the *lived* relation between men and their world […] In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but *the way* they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an "*imaginary*," *lived* relation. Ideology […] is the relation between men and their 'world,' that is, the (overdetermined) unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence. In ideology the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that *expresses will* (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality. (1969: 233-234; emphasis in original)

One of Dick's favourite quotations for describing the deceptive nature of reality is the line from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885), which goes: "Things are seldom what they seem; skim milk masquerades as cream".[16] But for this quotation to function in line with the ideas of Lacan and Althusser depicted above, we would have to ask what it is that makes skim milk appear like cream *to us*. To do this, we have to move beyond surface appearances; the imaginary requires us to rewrite Gilbert and Sullivan's line: "Things are often what they seem *because* skim milk masquerades as cream". This is the theoretical basis for the hospital in *VALIS*. By undermining the hospital as an institution that we take for granted and therefore misrecognise as a coherent teleological structure,

[15] For a useful description of this, see Terry Eagleton *Ideology: An Introduction* (2007 [1991]: 142-143).
[16] The line appears in the novels *The Game-Players of Titan* (1963: 88) and *Time Out* (1959: 55), as well as in the essay 'How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later (in Sutin, 1995 [1985]: 275).

Dick enables to perceive it as a set of contradictory and contingent relations. By showing us this, Dick provides us with a system for processing the text's disorienting oscillations between the theological and the autobiographical, the mystical and the political, the spiritual and the psychological, the ancient and the modern.

Fat ends up in the psychiatric hospital as a result of "his spectacular suicide attempt with the pills, the razor blade and the car engine" (Dick, 1981: 48). But exactly what causes this unsuccessful instance of overkill is muddied by the text's narration. The event is first broached on page eleven, in the narrator's condensed, fragmented history of the 1970s, quoted above. The reason given for Fat's actions is that he is "totally crazy with grief" from Gloria's death. It takes another two chapters before the narrative circles back to this event, which, in the opening sentence of Chapter Four, attributes responsibility to Fat's wife: "all this due to Beth taking their son Christopher and leaving him" (1981: 48). Here cause and effect become murky, as does the reliability of the narrator. What is certain, however, is that the suicide attempt renders him "technically dead," for a short time, and also "spiritually" dead (1981: 51). Fat, therefore, is in need of healing, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. But he must also face the fact that his actions are socially taboo and the psychiatric hospital is not just there to heal, but is also a kind of prison – "he arrived under armed guard at the psychiatric lock-up" (1981: 48). Thus Fat's actions establish the terms through which we confront the hospital as an ideological site.

In Fat's suicide attempt we can see how the totality of the hospital is determined by discernible contradictions at work within it. How, for example, can we expect Fat to get the psychological treatment and rehabilitation he needs when he is treated like a criminal and made to pay for the privilege? As the narrator reflects, "Fat had gone to the county hospital in the first place because he didn't have the money to be taken to a private hospital. So now he had learned something else about being crazy: not only does it get you locked up, but it costs you a lot of money" (1981: 56). Another problem is diagnosing the type of healing that Fat requires. If we put aside the physical damage done to his body, then we are left with the tension between psychological and

spiritual healing. If Fat's addiction to God is a symptom of mental illness, then he needs psychological treatment. But, in Dick, authoritative institutions peddle myopic ways of seeing which perpetuate schizophrenia. Furthermore, the extent to which official medical discourse constitutes "truth" and can, therefore, hand down diagnoses is a question of biopolitics. The latter is highlighted in Ian Hacking's discussion of the power relations involved in "making up people," a process he divides into two vectors: "One is the vector of labelling from above, from a community of experts who create a 'reality' that some people make their own. Different from this is the vector of the autonomous behavior of the person so labelled, which presses from below, creating a reality every expert must face" (Hacking in Heller, Sosna, et al, 1986: 168). The contradiction Hacking conveys here sends us back to Freud who, in the closing remarks to his famous study of paranoia in the Schreber case, brings to light the authority that is always already contained in the relationship between the analyst and analysand: "It remains for the future to decide whether there is more delusion in my theory than I should like to admit, or whether there is more truth in Schreber's delusion than other people are as yet prepared to believe" (1958 [1911]: 79).

We can use this potential for authoritative (and authorial) inversion to flip the novel's God-as-delusion formulation around. In doing so, Fat's multivalent theology – which draws on Buddhism, Christianity, Gnosticism, Judaism, and Taoism as its religious sources, filtering them through the science-fictional aesthetic of the pink beam – offers a kind of alternative therapy or "mystical healing" (1991: 99), as Peter Stilling calls it. Yet theology is also framed as a kind of addiction: "drug-taking had ended, and everyone had begun casting around for a new obsession. For us the new obsession, thanks to Fat, was theology" (Dick, 1981: 32). Therefore, Fat's encounter with God leaves him craving an experience he cannot regain: "For Fat, finding God (if indeed he did find God) became, ultimately, a bummer, a constantly diminishing supply like the contents of a bag of uppers. Who deals God?" (1981: 36). And God, who may possess the power to heal, "can be good and terrible – not in succession – but at the same time" (1981: 199). In *VALIS*, every point produces its counterpoint; every time we take up a position we find that it presents its own negation.

Reading *VALIS* is an exhausting experience, as its ceaseless oscillations often feel like they are designed to drive us to the untenable action of picking sides – Phil or Fat, rationality or irrationality, sanity or insanity – or to reading the novel as the staging of an entropic textual process where the abundance of meaning dissolves into sameness. But the hospital indicates that there is something systematic at work here which, in fact, relies on constant flip-flopping as a means of validating both contradictory readings at once.

I have said that when we approach the hospital as a "thing" we perceive it as analogous with healing. This teleological relation is then problematized by the political implications of the hospital as a social structure. Thus we are first presented with Fat needing urgent medical attention, followed by the irony that having been saved he is effectively criminalised and incarcerated. These conflicting characteristics are further complicated by the religious aspects of the hospital. The latter is attributed partly to the novum of Fat's theological quest, but it is also a result of the "realist" style of autobiography. In regards to the latter, there is nothing odd about patients in an Orange County medical facility holding religious beliefs, so we are not surprised when we encounter a patient who is a Jehovah's Witness or learn that the patients possess a copy of the Bible. What this aspect of the "social fabric" does do, though, is bring into question the notion of healing as a secular field and counterpoise a different kind of law to that of the state. We can see, then, that there are three contentious discourse structures brought to light through the hospital: the medical, the political, and the spiritual. While they cannot be synthesised, they struggle over conceptual territory and form synchronic connections through their relationality, which in turn threatens their stability: what happens, say, when a medical professional advocates therapies that are not sanctioned by the official medical body, as one of Fat's doctors does (1981: 65)? This means that as distinctive structures they are stable enough to be discernible, but, like the hospital itself, when we start to unpick them and test them against each other their identities blur. What prevents them from collapsing into sameness, then, is that they work relationally as a kind of circuit or interface for information

processing. Thus it is useful to imagine these categories arranged in a triadic relationship, where each point is in constant contact with the other two.

The narrator describes the psychiatric ward as a miniaturised surveillance state: “In the central office, which had glass walls and a locked door, the staff watched the patients and made notations” (1981: 59). But despite its oppressive nature, it is not marked by overt physical violence. This is distinctive to the antipsychiatry narratives of the 1950s and 60s, which are invoked here in the novel’s reference to both Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962): “Not much goes on in a mental ward, contrary to what mythic novels relate” (1981: 60). Instead, the hospital is framed as a kind of penal waiting room: “in a mental hospital – especially a county lock-up mental hospital – everyone is waiting. They wait to get out” (1981: 60). The paradox that mental illness presents at a social level, Phil reflects, is that the hegemony has no problem with it unless you reveal it: “Being crazy and getting caught at it, out in the open, turns out to be a way to wind up in jail” (1981: 56). This idea is elaborated in *Transmigration*, where the narrator-protagonist Angel Archer contrasts the delusional obsession of Bishop Archer, who is trying to contact his dead son, with the schizophrenia of Bill Lundborg, whose condition causes him to bounce between hospital, prison, and the “outside” world:

> [Archer’s] is an eerie kind of autism because it revolves around a single idea; it does not invade your general field, your total attention. Outside of this spurious premise, this one faulty induction, you are clear-headed and sane. It is a localized madness, allowing you to speak and act normally the rest of the time. Therefore no one locks you up because you can still earn a living, take baths, drive a car, take out the trash. You are not crazy in the manner that Bill Lundborg is crazy, and in a certain sense (depending on how you define ‘crazy’) you are not crazy at all. (Dick, 1982: 111)

This makes mental illness explicitly political, because it must ultimately be checked against a hegemonic conception of society that is organised around capitalist exploitation. This situates Bill as part of the lumpen proletariat, as the condition of his mental health restricts his efficiency as a worker and, therefore, diminishes his social value.

In *VALIS*, the patients waiting to get out are stuck in a closed loop. This is because society's "answers" – in this case the practices of its medical institutions – turn "healing" into repetitive cycles, which bear the unsettling resemblance of capital's cycles of boom and bust. The effect this has on the spiritual vector of the hospital is to undergird the notion that Fat's theology is a form of conspiracy theory, which tries to suture the wound of this traumatic stasis, but which resembles the same kind of delusional wish fulfilment that Angel sees in Bishop Archer's search for his dead son. Here we can see how the political, medical, and spiritual combine to produce a negative reading of the hospital as a repressive reality – a Black Iron Prison. This is mirrored in the closed loop depicted through one of Fat's roommates in the hospital: "for hours she had been trying to throw up the Thorazine they had forced on her; she believed […] that the Thorazine had poison in it, by which her husband – who had penetrated the top levels of the hospital staff under a variety of names – intended to finish killing her" (1981: 53). Here we reencounter the postmodern supplementation of death that is portrayed in *Scanner*. People are turned into shaking, clacking reflex machines because late-capitalist society lacks the measure for their inclusion as human beings.

At the same time, the novel inverts this grim reality through the collective spiritual resistance that the hospital setting facilitates. Shortly after Fat has been hospitalised, he recalls a phone conversation with Kevin:

> 'You were in a lot of pain when you had your experiencel you had that impacted wisdom tooth and you were – ' On the phone Kevin lowered his voice […] 'You remember. Afraid about the authorities'
>
> 'I was nuts,' Fat had answered. 'They weren't after me'. (1981: 52)

In refuting admitting to his own paranoia, Fat clears the way for us to read the hospital in another way. After this, Fat has a dream in which he experiences "the two-world superimposition" (1981: 54), in which 1970s California is laminated with a vision of ancient Rome. Within the vision of Rome, he sees the Black Iron Prison. In the dream, the prison is under attack: "An organization of Christian, not regular Christians such as those who attended church every Sunday and prayed, but secret early Christians […] had started an assault on the prison, and with success. The secret, early Christians were filled with joy" (1981: 54). Later, we learn that one of the patients has been allowed to keep her Bible, which she shares with the other patients. Debbie, a friend of Fat's, is forbidden by the hospital staff from reading it, but "Fat sometimes turned their copy of the Bible, their communal copy, over to Debbie for a fast look at one of the psalms" (1981: 60). While it is a small act, it is both meaningful and invokes collectivity. Moreover, it challenges the nostalgia for a binary paranoid relation – which is invoked in the references to Leary and Kesey – critiquing countercultural individualism as fetishizing agency panic.

The hospital condenses these dislocated perspectives into a symbolic space. Like the waiting room that Phil describes, it is a strange zone that we as readers must process and be processed through continuously. At the same time, this makes the hospital a strangely liminal site, a rest stop or enclave which, because of its symbolic overdetermination, dislocates it from the rest of the world. In some respects it resembles the fake police station in *Do Androids?* – another instance of Dick flouting the rules of the novum. Deckard is taken into custody after his first confrontation with the android Luba Luft, but the police station he arrives at is one that he has never seen or heard of before. This is because it is a rogue operation run by escaped androids. Its existence defies all logic – it is never properly explained how or why it is there – and yet it is fundamentally important to the rest of the narrative, illuminating the dichotomies of the human-android relation. In this respect, it sits at an angle to the rest of the text – it is an insertion that does not synthesise. Although the hospital does not present the same extremity of logical dislocation, it is similar in that it is situated on a seam

between inner and outer: not quite a microcosm of society, nor a spurious illusion; not quite a prison, nor a site for political organisation. This strange betweenness occurs because Fat's suicide attempt demystifies the hospital's relational structure; it makes us confront it as an ideological site whose contradictions are already exposed. In this respect, we view it as something that is itself split between two different concepts of reality: wholeness and relationality. Thus we are forced to dismiss the notion of an either/or perspective and to confront reality as a contested interpretative territory.

Analsyand, Analyst, Authority

For David Golumbia, there are two ways of approaching reality in Dick's late works:

> The first is the contention that such an Absolute Reality exists, that Dick imagines that he himself has access to it and that we all should strive for such access and be able to achieve it. And the second is that such an Absolute Reality, in whatever fashion, does not exist; but that in any number of fashions, it is a trope, an instrument, a way of speaking, or even a desired but, in principle, unattainable goal. I believe this latter perspective, in the end, to be far more important to Dick's writing than is the former. (1996: 89)

The first formulation is akin to what Palmer believes is the only available option left to the reader at the end of the *VALIS*, which is that the novel enables us to comprehend "the possibility that Philip K. Dick believes in VALIS" (2003: 236). This, he argues, constitutes a literary effect where textuality becomes a screen through which we view his belief. The second, which Golumbia favours, as do I, is that an all-comprehending real is a tool through which to frame questions about our perception of reality. This recalls Rossi's notion that within *VALIS* is a "chasm," which it tries to fill with its frantic oscillations, staging of quests, wild theorising, and its restless generic shifts (what Rossi calls

"subgenre *switches* or *shunts*" [2004: 213; emphasis in original]). As I have argued above, part of what causes the fundamental absence that *VALIS* is trying to negotiate is its historical predicament. The diffusion of energy that occurs in the 1960s cools into atomised burnout and postmodern culture swallows up the history of political radicalism in its commodification of cultural margins. For this reason, the text simultaneously stumbles over its amnesiac memory, while its so-called "anamnesis" or "theophany" tries to construct a theory of the world that bypasses the historical altogether.

In the hospital, what is dangerous and what is rebelled against is predicated on the notion that institutions are able to create their own realities through their superstructural positions of authority. By positing this, the novel does not deny the seriousness of mental illness, but it questions exactly what makes one reality authoritative and another delusional. Luckhurst (2015) applies this principle to the use of diagnostic language across Dick's oeuvre, stating that "Dick's wild epistemological adventures were not just typically Californian: they were also relentlessly 'diagnostic'" (Luckhurst in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 13). This, Luckhurst argues, presents Dick with a dichotomy, as while medical diagnostic frameworks provide him with a rich source of ideas – split-brain theory, hallucinogenic drugs, schizophrenic tomb worlds – they also exert an oppressive force in their "pseudo-objectivity" (2015: 16). Ironically, diagnostic language becomes another form of addiction from which Dick cannot break: "Dick's countercultural suspicion rejects the normative language of psychiatric labels, yet his resistance collapses whenever some compelling new diagnostic appears" (2015: 27). This attempt to rupture from hegemonic discourses is fundamental to *VALIS*, which uses the contentiousness of Fat's religious experiences and his frantic theorising to probe the contradictions of ideological reality. Thus the question that both Luckhurst and Golumbia point toward is that making up worlds is a question of who controls the means of representation, who has the power to dictate what is and is not real.

One of the people Fat meets in the hospital is Dr Leon Stone. Stone is a particularly intriguing character in *VALIS*, and the two conversations he has with Fat provide, alongside the structure of the hospital, an important mis-en-abyme in the novel's engagement with the contested conceptual

territories of healing and authority. Stone is more ambiguous than the inhuman "straights" of *Scanner* and far removed from the android cogito of Philip Resch, but he is by no means one of Dick's benevolent humans. Nevertheless, he is important, both to Fat and to the reader, precisely because he presents us with further uncertainties and destabilisations: "Dr Stone was totally crazy, but in a good way. Dr Stone was the first person at North Ward, outside the patients, who had talked to him as if he were human" (Dick, 1981: 65). Indeed, Stone is not the kind of dreary medical professional we might expect to encounter in a text that retains Dick's perennial disdain for authority figures. It is fitting, then, that he introduces Fat to the alternative therapy of Bach remedies: a decidedly New Age-sounding treatment which involves the use of flowers preserved in alcohol. Notably, this is much different from the brutal shock therapies and lobotomies that mark *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, nor is it the inhuman verbal abuse of the Synanon-style treatment Bob receives at New-Path in *Scanner*, and the Silicon Valley healing that helps Angel in *Transmigration*. Instead, what the Bach remedies – which Stone mispronounces "*batch*" (1981: 65) – imply is a destabilisation of Stone's status as an authority. This is developed by the alarming advice he gives to Fat immediately after his diagnosis: "What you should have done, instead of trying to kill yourself would have been, take your son away from your wife – it's the law in California that a minor child must remain with his father until there is a court order to the contrary. And then you should have struck your wife with a rolled-up newspaper or a phonebook" (1981: 65). This is not the course of action that can be condoned by an empathic character. The advocacy of the law and of domestic violence are unpleasant, but the statement is also absurd as medical advice. The old adage of the inmates running the hospital raises its head here, but there is more to what is going on than simple farce. Rather than outright chauvinism, it is possible that Stone's advice is designed to complement the Bach remedies. What Stone says is in line with bourgeois hegemony and is, therefore, exactly what Fat *should* have done. He is legally allowed custody over his son and the patriarchal society he lives in deems certain acts of domestic violence acceptable. This, of course, is deranged logic, not unlike an incident in *Scanner* in which the dopers help out a straight who invites them round to remove a bug from her house. After

they tell her that it is harmless, she responds: “IF I HAD KNOWN IT WAS HARMLESS I WOULD HAVE KILLED IT MYSELF” (1977: 73). There is a difference, as Dick persistently reminds us, between what is acceptable to the hegemony and what is ethical. Of course, if Fat is insane, in the sense that he balks at social norms, then this logic is not available to him. The idea that it might now be is momentarily dangled in front of us by Stone, who asserts that Fat’s suicide attempt allowed him to get “‘in touch with reality for the first time’” (1981: 65). But Fat is not crazy in this way – he has no desire for the “normal” – therefore, what Stone achieves is to portray the perversity that lies in authoritative definitions of sanity and the law.

Most of the conversation that takes place between Fat and Stone concerns metaphysics and theology; the common ground on which these two otherwise very different men meet. Stilling argues that this constitutes a subversion of the analyst-analysand relationship: “Dr. Stone abandons his role as the Lacanian *Subject Presumed to Know* and becomes a participant in a true dialogue with his patient on a topic […] that fascinates both” (1991: 95). In practicing Lacanian psychoanalysis, the “subject supposed to know” refers to the transference of the analysand’s unconscious knowledge onto the analyst, making the former “a priori ‘guilty’ of hiding a secret” (Žižek, 2006). Therefore, if transference does not take place here, one of its implications is to further displace the paranoia that Fat renounces in the telephone call with Kevin. As to whether their discussions truly levels their hierarchical relationship is less certain, however. Phil is aware that Stone is a skilled analyst, who “had a paranormal talent, like his paranormal Bach remedies which were a palpable hoax, a pretext to listen to the patient. Rum with a flower dipped in it – nothing more, but a sharp mind hearing what the patient said” (1981: 74). Beneath the hyperbole, what Phil sees as “paranormal” about Stone is that he is a good analyst. This kind of checking of the healing power of God against that of humans happens on several occasions in the text. One of these is when Fat is saved from his suicide attempt by the actions of his pharmacist: “A lot can be said for the infinite mercies of God, but the smarts of a good pharmacist, when you get down to, is worth more” (1981: 49). Another comes towards the end of the novel, when Kevin observes that if Zebra has informed Fat that his son has a

life-threatening birth defect, then the hospital that provided the medical care is "'the best church in town'" (1981: 236). However, despite being situated within this cluster of human healers, Stone's interactions with Fat do not properly shatter his own institutional authority: "They – note the 'they' – paid Dr Stone to figure out what had destroyed the patients entering the ward" (1981: 74). Yet the talking cure he provides is helpful, as it recalibrates our conception of hierarchies of knowledge to the degree that Fat's theories about God are given validity against the cruelness and absurdity of the hegemony.

There is, though, a question mark that looms over Stone, which the seemingly sane and rational Phil makes us aware of. On the one hand, Phil recognises Stone as "one of the most important people in Horselover Fat's life" and wonders "Is this what they mean about God's mysterious ways? […] Fat had to die, or nearly dies, to be cured. Or nearly cured" (1981: 74). Phil's observations are underpinned by doubt and, sure enough, Fat extrapolates that "Dr Stone was a micro-form of God" (1981: 75). Yet if Fat is not fully cured from his divine madness, then at least, Phil observes, "by regarding benign people as micro-forms of God, Fat […] remained in touch with a good god, not a blind, cruel or evil one" (1981: 76-77). These tentative hopes are shattered, however, when immediately after being discharged from hospital Fat moves in with Sherri, who "did not merely plan to get sick again; she like Gloria planned to take as many people with her as possible" (1981: 83). Therefore, Phil concludes that "In no sense had Dr Stone cured Fat" (1981: 82). In fact, it is quite possible that his therapy has only exacerbated his illness.

The crucial point in Fat and Stone's meetings is when the former transfers power to Fat "'Then I'm right about Nag Hammadi,' he said to Dr Stone./'You would know,' Dr Stone said, and then he said something that no one had ever said to Fat before. 'You're the authority,' Dr Stone said (1981: 73). One way to interpret this exchange is that Stone's endorsement means "Fat would never depart from faith in his encounter with God" (1981: 71) – which is how Phil sees it. For Phil, Fat's theology is synonymous with the traumatic wound that constitutes his mental illness: it fills in the hole of Gloria and his ex-wife, and later it will fill the gaps left by Sherri and Sophia as well. Thus

Stone appears to lock in place Fat's delusion, while confirming that the medical authority has no viable reality that can sublimate it. This prognosis is doubly bleak, as not only does it consign Fat to the closed loop that is proposed by the hospital waiting room and his paranoid roommate, but it reveals that the reality of the hegemony cannot provide healing to those who cannot conform to its terms. But Stone's offer of authority also reminds us that it is a similar offer that Fat extends to the narrator in the split at the beginning of the text. In order to gain "much needed objectivity," the narrator takes up the position of authority we would expect to encounter in an autobiographical text: the I of the author-narrator. And yet, this is the exact kind of interpretative myopia that the novel cannot accept. Thus to give Fat authority is to prevent the novel falling into the stasis of a single authoritative interpretation. It is true that Stone's act only restores Fat's health temporarily – it is not a cure and only a tentative partial solution – but to deny the authority of the singular interpretation at the level of genre offers the potential to revisit the sites on which narrative is formed, which is literally acted out in Fat's final journey to Micronesia: the fragmented symbolic site "'where a lot of World War Two took place'".

It is possible to perceive the hospital and Dr Stone as reproducing precisely the kind of finger trap that Luckhurst sets out above. Indeed, *VALIS* does not seem to offer much certainty as to how we can break down the Black Iron Prison. This is something that we have to accept with Dick's writing: it does not give us clear utopian prospects or definitive paths of action. But there is a certain truth in *VALIS*, which is useful, if only as a premise – a small glimpse of God in the trash – in that it exposes the ambiguity of interpretative space. Its ending offers a final deferral: Fat's search continues, while Phil remains at home, grounded in front of the TV, waiting for a message from the divine. This elliptical ending denies any reunification between Fat and Phil, *and* of another message from God. What is proffered here is that truth cannot be revealed like the excavation of an ancient artefact, nor can it answer whether Fat is insane or enlightened. Jacques Allain-Miller makes an important interjection in this matter of truth and knowledge when he posits: "We know that truth is not knowledge. Truth is rather what makes knowledge stumble" (1988). If Dick makes us return

continuously to the sites on which narratives are formed, be they historical or autobiographical, he does this precisely to negate "[the] final authoritative definition" (Luckhurst in Dunst and Schlensag, 2015: 27). Instead, this restlessness asserts the right to be dissatisfied with the reality that we have. To undermine the Black Iron Prison, we must continually search for partial solutions to its menace. They may not be there in *VALIS*, but its relentless pursuit of answers underscores the necessity to continue struggling.

Conclusion: "Things fall apart, but they never leave my heart"

In the same year that *VALIS* was published, Dick wrote a speech called 'How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later'. The speech was never delivered, but it was published not long after his death in the short story collection *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon* (1985). It is one of Dick's best non-fiction pieces, witty, speculative, and rigorously analytical – much different from the citational vertigo and metaphysical flip-flopping of *VALIS* and the Exegesis. After an anecdotal sketch about being interviewed for French television at Disneyland – just a few miles from where Dick was living at the time – he turns to the question of what a sf writer "knows". It is Dick playing the idiot savant; his strongest position, from which his startlingly lucid analyses break sharply and unexpectedly from the page. He is bemused by the attention that sf is attracting from the intellectual community because "Science fiction writers, I am sorry to say, really don't know anything. We can't talk about science, because our knowledge of it is limited and unofficial, and usually our fiction is dreadful" (Dick in Sutin, 1995 [1978]: 259). But if Dick denies the sf writer's authority over both science and fiction, what the sf writer *is* good at – what *he* excels at – is constructing universes that "fall apart" (1995: 262). Why does he enjoy doing this? "Because today we live in a society in which spurious realities are manufactured by the media, by governments, by big corporations, by religious groups, political groups" (261-62) which have the power to create realities that blot out *all other possibilities*. When Dick says, "I do not distrust their motives: I distrust their power" (1995: 262), it sounds compromising, as surely all those agents of capitalist oppression have nothing but the worst intentions in mind. But here Dick recognises that what is so frightening about capital, even in its most despicable forms, is that its oppressive practices proceed from the notion that it is the best possible model and, therefore, working in the interests of the greater good. In this case, "motivations" are secondary to "power" because it is the consolidation of the latter – of the means of production – in the hands of a select few that results in the monopolisation of reality. A universe that falls apart opposes this anti-utopian notion that the reality of the hegemony is the only viable one.

Dick's comments here are reminiscent of an illuminating passage from Baudelaire that Walter Benjamin quotes in 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire':

> 'I long for the return of the dioramas whose enormous, crude magic subjects me to the spell of a useful illusion. I prefer looking at the backdrop paintings of the stage where I find my favourite dreams treated with consummate skill and tragic concision, Those things, so completely false, are for that very reason much closer to the truth, whereas the majority of our landscape painters are liars, precisely because they fail to lie'. (Baudelaire in Benjamin, 1999 [1970]: 187)

Dick's work excels as "crude magic" and "useful illusion," and he would certainly have agreed with Baudelaire that the immaculate, "realistic" image of the world is by no means truthful. Indeed, one of the ways to think about Dick's increasing interest in hermetic knowledge in his later years is that it offers exactly this kind of useful estrangement. Thus the labyrinthine theories of Fat shunt us through the fabulously confounding diorama of *VALIS*'s dislocated universe, which Dick pieced together with literature mail-ordered from such weird and wonderful sources as The Rosicrucian Supply Bureau (see Dick in Williams, 1991 [1974]: 256). Again, it is worth reflecting that if Dick really did believe in VALIS, then he also constructed it to be something inherently fallible, "unbelievable" in the reverse way that Baudelaire's landscape painters are believable.

But there is another aspect to these universes that fall apart that help us to realise and recall the role that genre plays in Dick's (de)constructions of reality. Our hearts might sink a little bit when in his essay he tells us that his motivations for creating these sham worlds are "a secret love of chaos" (Dick in Sutin, 1995: 262); but here he is playing another character: the android Pris curiously pulling the legs of a spider in *Do Androids?* What really interests Dick about these destabilisations of reality is they enable him to see how his characters "cope with this problem" (1995: 262); in other words, how they themselves construct new universes, how they formulate their own partial

solutions. In his reading of *VALIS*, Rossi points out that the initials of the group of friends (after Fat temporarily disappears) spells "PKD" (Phil, Kevin, and David) (2012: 255). It is another hermetic symbol, but it also a clue. While Horselover Fat is translated into "Phil Dick," Dick's middle initial, "Kindred," does not appear in the novel. And yet what Dick is certainly signalling when he talks about universes that fall apart is that this constant process of construction and reconstruction initiates a collective participatory process as a means from breaking from the ossified reality of capital.

We have seen over the course of this thesis that Dick's engagement with genre, although playful, is not just clever play. His schlocky sf aesthetic reconnects, reassess, and problematize sf's pulp past, whose marginality gave him the space and the tools to make compelling estrangements of reality, but which also confined him to the "ghetto" of genre fiction. Indeed, there is a strange absence of mobility in Dick's stories. Very rarely do characters traverse alien territories on foot.[17] When people do move any distance, it is vehicle-assisted – be it by space ship, "flapple," or just a regular car – or with the aid of a sf novum like teleportation. Movement is difficult, as are social interactions; stepping outside your front door may very well sink you into a solipsistic tomb world. It is worth noting here that not only does this sense of stasis reflect a general condition of capitalism, whose relentless busy work keeps us rooted to the spot, but that Dick suffered relentlessly from agoraphobia. Therefore, while Dick critiques the monopolies of diagnostic language and medical institutions, we should remember that his work reflects a painful lived experience.

In his study of Chandler, Jameson writes, "As an involuntary explorer of the society, Marlowe visits either those places you don't look or those you can't: the anonymous or the wealthy and secretive" (2016: 7). Indeed, for the gumshoe, nowhere is off limits and the mean streets are the arteries they exploit in their mapping of the city. On the surface, this seems completely at odds with Dick's immobile characters and entropic worlds. But while this might make us pause to reconsider my comparison between Dick and Chandler in Chapter Two, we can posit that Dick gives us a very

[17] An exception to this rule is Dick's collaborative novel with Roger Zelazny, *Deus Irae*, whose story is a literal pilgrimage ("pilg"). But the Dickian irony here is that the pilgrim, Tibor McMasters, is, as his proposed title for the novel reveals, a "Kneeling Legless Man".

definite sense of movement and mobility *through genre*. In the introduction to this thesis I call this process "historical-generic reflexivity," where cognitive estrangement facilitates the incorporation of anachronistic genre materials as a way of opening up historical space. This is much different to any naïve "mixing" of aesthetics, such as in the differently themed tourist zones in Michael Crichton's *Westworld* (1973). Instead, it invokes Jameson's notion that at any point in time there is a dominant mode of production, but whose dominance is challenged and antagonised by alternative and anachronistic modes. What Dick demonstrates through this relation is that genre is not static, but that it gives us the potential for greater mobility. Therefore, Dick's cognitive estrangements are less preoccupied with the "sober socio-political extrapolation, explanation and testing" that Palmer designates as the conventional function of the novum. Instead, Dick's estrangements engage with the logic and relations between genres.

I began this thesis by assessing Dick's reputation and relevance in contemporary culture. I would like to end it with a tentative proposition of how we might continue to think of Dick in years to come and what he can continue to offer us in terms of useful ideas for resisting capitalist oppression. While we can still think of Dick the man and author, he is, whether we like it or not, a metonym, a commodity, a brand that cannot be separated from culture industry. But Dick's engagements with genre remind us of the importance of getting *between* things, of exploiting gaps in the system, of the mobility (as well as the danger) presented by the struggle for new formulations of reality. The last two decades have borne witness to crises within capital that have exposed its imaginary as the most squalid of anti-utopias. Whether it be the bailing out of banks after the 2008 financial crisis, the sanctioned drowning of migrants in the Mediterranean, "where," as Franco "Bifo" Beradi laments, "salted water has replaced ZyklonB" (2017), or in the denial of food subsidies to families impoverished by austerity, neoliberalism has proved itself both deplorable and unsustainable. It is still easy to imagine the end of the world, but it is becoming ever easier to imagine the end of capitalism. Dick's work underlines the importance of imagining worlds that could otherwise…even those that fall apart two days later.

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